Progressive Islamic thought, civil society and the Gulen movement in the national context: parallels with Indonesia

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"We arrive at the truth, not by the reason only, but also by the heart."
(Blaise Pascal)

"… The debate between an internalized religious outlook, represented by Sufism as one spiritual approach to life, and to a modernist conception of the individual in secular society, is the great debate of out time, one by which religious thinker's views will inevitably be defined and categorized and on which that thinker's credibility and relevance will be determined." (Michel 2005: 343)

Introduction

Fethullah Gulen (born 1941), or Hodjaeffendi as he is known affectionately by hundreds of thousands of people in his native Turkey and abroad, is one of the most significant Islamic thinkers and activists to have emerged in the twentieth century. His optimistic and forward-looking thought, with its emphasis on self development of both heart and mind through education, of engaging proactively and positively with the modern world and of reaching out in dialogue and a spirit of cooperation between religious communities, social strata and nations can be read as a contemporary reformulation of the teachings of Jalaluddin Rumi, Yunus Emre, and other classic Sufi teachers (Michel, 2005a, 2005b; Saritoprak, 2003; 2005a; 2005b; Unal and Williams, 2005). More specifically, Gulen can be seen to be carrying on where Said Nursi (1876-1960), another great Anatolian Islamic intellectual, left off: charting

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a way for Muslim activists in Turkey and beyond to effectively contribute to the development of modern society that avoids the pitfalls and compromises of party-political activism and replaces the narrowness of Islamist thought with a genuinely inclusive and humanitarian understanding of religion's role in the modern world (Abu-Rabi, 1995; Markham and Ozdemir, 2005; Vahide, 2005, Yavuz, 2005a).

If the development and articulation of such thinking were all that Gulen had achieved he would still certainly take his place alongside several dozen like-minded, twentieth century Islamic intellectuals, such as the late Pakistani-American thinker Fazlur Rahman (1982). There is another dimension to Gulen's endeavors, however, that places him in a rather different class of Muslim leaders. Through his work at the University of Chicago Fazlur Rahman touched the lives of many young Muslim thinkers, often transforming them, and through his bold and eloquently reasoned writings he touched many thousands more. But Gulen has managed to achieve what Rahman, through no fault of his own, could not. Gulen has built a social movement that has mobilized many tens of thousands of activists in Turkey and beyond and this movement has steadily extended its influence across all strata of modern Turkish society (Cetin, 2005; Eickleman, 1998; Yilmaz, 2005).

Rahman and the majority of other similar reformist Islamic thinkers, many of them also exiled from their homelands on account of their progressive ideas, were unable to build social movements. The reasons for this are complicated and varied but have to do essentially with the political regimes that dominate large sections of the Muslim world, not least the Arab world, today. These regimes have repressed the growth of civil society and forced underground most expressions of Islamic activism, depriving their societies of the benefits of positive activism and creating the conditions where radical Islamism becomes the chief channel of dissent and youthful anger (Tibi, 1990; 1997).

The Gulen movement deserves careful study then, not just because of the quality of Gulen's ideas but also because it represents one of the few such progressive and inclusive mass-based civil society movements in the world today (Yavuz, 2003a; 2003b, Voll, 2003). This must necessarily involve analysis of the character of the movement and on what basis it can be said to be progressive and inclusive, for within Turkey itself there are elements of the state and military elite who argue that it represents a threat to national stability. Many Muslim nations share with Turkey a twentieth century history of military-back authoritarian, or semi-authoritarian, regimes that are deeply antagonistic to Islamic movements and suspicious of civil society in general. Ironically, this antagonism, and the suppression and persecution that it has produced have tended to exacerbate the tendency for these movements to champion radical Islamist ideologies.

Because of the social conservatism, deep piety and general earnestness of its members and because of Fethullah Gulen's remarkable charismatic authority the Gulen movement is often mistaken for either an Islamist movement or a *tarekat* (a Sufi brotherhood). Closer examination reveals that it is in fact something very different. But it is not the only such movement in the Muslim world. The one other large Muslim nation in which similar movements can be found is Indonesia. The fact that it is only in Turkey and Indonesia that such well developed and broadly influential progressive Islamic social movements have so far emerged suggests that a lot can be learned about Turkey and Indonesia and about the nature of such movements by comparing them (Eliraz, 2004).

This paper will attempt to first locate and then describe the Gulen movement (or *hizmet* – service – as they prefer to describe themselves) in an historical and national context and then compare it with the mass-based Indonesian organizations of Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama (each having more than thirty million followers), and more specifically with the much smaller inclusive movements that have arisen from within these mass organizations under the inspiration of thinkers such as Nurcholish Madjid (born 1939) and Abdurrahman Wahid (born 1940). It will conclude with an assessment of the likely future courses of development and related challenges for these movements in Turkey and Indonesia, and from this attempt to forecast the longer-term contribution of the Gulen movement to the broader Muslim world, including the Muslim communities of Europe and the New World.

The big question being addressed here is whether Islamic thought and Islamic social movements can be truly modern. Implied in this question is the narrower issue of whether Islam and liberal democracy are compatible. In his landmark book Islamic Liberalism Leonard Binder (1988) approached this issue with considerable skepticism but finally answered in the affirmative. Five years later, and rather more famously Samuel Huntington wrote an essay in Foreign Affairs in which he arrived at a rather grimmer conclusion. The scope of Huntington's study, in both his article and the book that grew out of it (1996) was global but its most controversial aspects concerned Islam and the Muslim world:

> "It is my hypothesis that the fundamental source of conflict in this new world will not be primarily ideological or primarily economic. The great divisions among humankind and the dominating source of conflict will be cultural. Nation states will remain the most powerful actors in world affairs, but the principal conflicts of global politics will occur between nations and groups of different civilizations. The clash of civilizations will dominate global politics. The fault lines between civilizations will be the battle lines of the future." (Huntington, 1993)

Huntington's appreciation of the importance of culture and, by implication, religion, was refreshing. His conclusion, however was, of course, deeply troubling.

> ""The underlying problem for the West is not Islamic fundamentalism. It is Islam, a different civilization whose people are convinced of the superiority of their culture and are obsessed with the inferiority of their power." (Huntington, 1996:217-8)

Huntington appears to have conflated a radical Islamist view of the world with an Islamic view of the world. Many have identified this weakness and pointed out that it distorts his entire approach to analyzing empirical data about the Muslim world. Nevertheless, the unwelcome emergence of groups like al-Qaeda and Jemaah Islamiyah (Barton, 2004) has had the unfortunate effect of valorizing Huntington's thesis.

Over the past decade Huntington's 'clash of civilizations' thesis has carefully and effectively rebutted by leading scholars around the world to considerable effect. But the most consequential and enduring answer to Huntington will not come from his academic peers. Ultimately, it is progressive Islamic movements such as the Gulen *hizmet* that have the greatest potential to prove Huntington wrong (Benard, 2003). This means that a great deal more is riding on the question of whether Gulen's critics within the Turkish elite are right

than even they are aware. For if movements such as the Gulen *hizmet* are indeed not truly progressive in character and outlook and are in fact not profoundly supportive of liberal democracy then there is little hope for the rest of the Muslim world. Turkey's loss would be the world's loss. If on the other hand, the Gulen hizmet in Turkey, and its counterparts in Indonesia, are genuinely progressive social movements, tolerant of pluralism and supportive of liberal democracy then there is every reason to expect that Islamic culture and thought will, in their own way, make the same sort of positive contribution to the development of democracy and modernity as have Jewish and Christian culture and thought (Esposito and Voll, 1996; Rauf, 2004).

The unique environment of modern Turkey

Before examining the ideas of Fethullah Gulen and the social movement that has developed around him, and then attempting to locate both in their international context, it is helpful to start with a broad overview of Turkey's position in the Muslim world and the forces that have shaped the context in which the Gulen movement has developed over the past quarter of a century. This will lay a foundation for a comparative study of the Gulen movement in Turkey and similar movements in Indonesia.

Comparative studies are fraught with difficulty but they can be invaluable. Much of the misunderstanding about Islam and Muslim society that prevails today results from reductionism and essentialism.   Islam and Muslim society are often assumed to equate to certain aspects of Arabic culture and Arab society (and then often only in one part of the Arab world) and scant regard is given to historical context, political environment and prospects for development. One thing that could make a considerable difference to both popular and scholarly attitudes is the more extensive development of comparative studies of different regions of the Muslim world.

The Muslim world (that is to say, the belt of contiguous nations stretching half way around globe from Morocco to Indonesia in which Muslims represent a majority of the population, or, as in the case of India, a vitally significant minority) is home to more than 1.3 billion people, only around 20 percent of whom are ethnically Arab. Many of the most interesting developments in Islamic thought, both throughout history and in the modern period, have occurred in greater Asia, including the spheres of Turkic and Persian influence.

In purely demographic terms Turkey is very significant nation. The largest Muslim country today is Indonesia, with approximately 215 million Muslims, followed by India and Pakistan each with around 155 million Muslims and Bangladesh with approximately 120 million Muslims. Turkey, with a population of 70 million Muslims is considerably smaller than these Asia giants but as a nation it is bigger than Britain and France and not much smaller than Germany. It has a similar Muslim population to Iran, Egypt and Nigeria, is twice the size of Morocco and Algeria and three times the size of Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Syria and Yemen.[2] Moreover, the total population of Turkic peoples in the world is thought to be

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[2] These figures are much debated and precise population breakdowns are difficult to obtain (this is particularly the case with India where the Muslim proportion of the population is thought by many to be considerably larger than official figures

around 150 million.[3] This is particularly noteworthy given the plethora of educational activities of the Gulen movement amongst Turkic communities in Caucasus and Central Asia.

If Turkey is a big in demographic terms it is arguably even bigger in cultural terms. Unlike demography, culture is not the stuff of quantitative measurements. All assessments of culture remain subjective. Nevertheless, few would argue that in terms of cultural heritage Turkey's Ottoman (and Seljuk) past makes it a giant of the Muslim world. What is even clearer is that for most Turks the memory of Turkey's illustrious past, written not just in books but in stone and brick and so ubiquitous as to be familiar to all, under girds the conviction that which was once great will become great again. Indeed, this sense of manifest destiny inspired by the Ottoman past, appears to have fuelled the modernizing vision of the Mustafa Kemal Ataturk and his republican colleagues even as they sought to distance the new republic from its imperial and Islamic past (Lewis, 1968).

Ataturk was clearly concerned that his nation look forwards and not backward. He did not want modern Turkey to rest on its laurels and be mired in nostalgia for its Ottoman past. His profound desire for Turkey to become a modern nation produced a rather heavy-handed, top-down, transformation of Turkish culture. Virtually overnight men and women exchanged traditional clothing, often rich with elaborate markers of status, guild and profession, for contemporary Western-style clothing. At the same time the Arabic script used to write the Turkish language was replaced with modern, European-style roman script, and the Turkish lexicon was overhauled, stripping out numerous Arabic and Persian cognates and borrowings. This process of modernization did not begin with the republican reforms but its pace dramatically increased and its scope extended well beyond the French-speaking national elite.

In one sense the modernization of Turkish society begin in earnest with Sultan Mahmut II's reforms in 1826 that led to the abolition of the Janissary corps in 1826, the opening of medical and military schools, and the setting up of a general postal service. The Tanzimat Period, beginning in 1839 at the end of Mahmut II's reign, saw a series of sweeping reforms in the area of law and taxation. Then in 1856 the Paris Treaty saw the Ottoman Empire accepted as a European state and in 1876 the Young Turks drew up the First Constitution and a Turkish parliament was briefly established only to be dissolved by Sultan Abdulhamit II the following year. In 1908 the sultan was forced to accept constitutional rule, parliament was restored and then a year later Abdulhamit II was deposed as the Young Turks seized power. The final form of the modern Turkish state was only realized, however, after World War I. Turkey was drawn into the war because of its alliance with Germany. Turkish troops led by Mustafa Kemal were able repel the Allied landings on the Gallipoli Peninsula in 1915 but Germany's defeat in the war saw Istanbul occupied by the Anglo-French Army in 1918, giving rise to the 1919-1922 War of Independence. The Turkish Republic was inaugurated in

suggest) but a good starting point is the recently updated figures in the CIA's The World Factbook website (http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/) which gives the following population estimates for July 2005: Indonesia 242 million - 88.0% (213m) Muslim; Pakistan 162 million - 97% (157m) Muslim; India 1080 million - 13.4% (144m) Muslim; Turkey 70 million - 99.8% (70m) Muslim

[2] Hasan al-Banna was assassinated in February 1949, apparently because of the Brotherhood's involvement in the assignation of Egyptian Prime Minister Nurqrashi Pasha in December1948 (Ruthven 2000, 309).

[3] en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Turkic_peoples

1923 and in 1924 the sovereignty of the modern Turkish state secured with the Treaty of Lausanne.

In another sense, however, the process of modernization began much earlier, even well before the reign of Sultan Mahmut II. The Ottoman Empire is easy to criticize from a contemporary vantage point but judged alongside other political entities of its time it was, in many respects, more modern than its contemporaries. More than most it was open to new ideas and new ways of doing things and was comfortable with social and cultural pluralism.

The reforms of Kemal Ataturk and his fellow nationalists picked up where those of Young Turks had left off, and even though they built upon the foundation of Sultan Mahmut II's reforms they are critical of Sultan Abdulhamit II and Ottoman culture in general. Consequently, the modern Turkish Republic was defined in many ways in opposition to the Ottoman empire that had preceded it. Specifically, Ataturk summarized his reformist project as being comprised of the Six Arrows of republicanism, nationalism, populism, reformism, statism, and secularism, each one being a refutation of some aspect of the Ottoman period. In 1922 the nationalists abolished the sultanate and in 1924, in the wake of the treaty of Lausanne they abolished the caliphate thus ending the notional spiritual leadership of the entire Sunni Muslim world by the Ottoman sultans.

From its foundation in 1923 the Turkish Republic has enjoyed a curiously ambivalent relationship with Islam and with its Ottoman heritage (Lewis, 1968). On the one hand, confidence about modernization and Turkey's manifest destiny rests directly upon the successes of the Ottoman Empire as the last great Islamic empire. And, as dramatic as the Republic reforms were, they would not have been possible without the earlier modernizing reforms that began in the Ottoman period. On the other hand, the Ottoman reforms were judged inadequate when it came to overcoming religious conservatism.

The Republic response to what was seen as the inherent conservatism of Ottoman Islam was to engineer one of the most radical approaches to secularization seen any where in the world. In theory the secularism that was produced in Turkey was analogous to the laicism that been achieved in France with the reforms of the Third Republic; a secularism very different to that that had developed in Northern Europe, Britain and New World nations such as the United States, Canada and Australia. In practice the secularism of the Turkish Republic was unique.

Ishan Yilmaz (2005) argues that the republicans responded to the enduring cultural authority of Islam, and what they judged to be the failure of earlier reforms to constrain it, by seeking to achieve complete control of the production and dissemination of religious knowledge. The result is what Yilmaz has dubbed 'Lausannian Islam'. In signing the treaty of Lausanne the new Turkish Republic declared that all connections between Turkey, Islam and empire were completely finished. But Islam was not simply confined to the private sphere and left to individual conscience. What resulted was not a mere separation of 'church and state'.[4] Lest

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[4] The Greek word 'ecclesia' translated into English as 'church' means 'the assembly [of believers] and is very close in meaning to the Arabic word 'jemaat'. The Turkish word for mosque 'cami' (jami) is a cognate of 'jemaat', as is 'Cumat' (Jumat) the Turkish word for Friday, the day in which the assembly meets at the mosque.

the 'church' interfere with the business of the state the state took charge of the business of the church. When the Republic was inaugurated the Directorate of Religious Affairs replaced the Ottoman Ministry of Religion and became a key element in the state's management of national culture and control of dissent (Yavuz, 2003a).

The nationalists in Indonesia did something very similar when they declared their republic in 1945 (Boland, 1971). They too decided that the best prospects for developing a modern nation were to be found in a secular state structure and they also recognized that the state would nevertheless have to actively engage with religion, via a ministry of religious affairs. Like the nationalists in Turkey after enduring four years of world war they too had to fight a war of independence against European imperialism to secure the sovereignty of their nation. The result of this in Indonesia, as in Turkey, was the privileging of the military, culturally, socially and politically, as the heroes of the nationalist struggle and the enduring defenders of national interest. In both nations a strong military was seen as essential to the survival and healthy development of the new republics.

The ideological thinking behind the statism of the Turkish Republic was paralleled two decades later in the Republic of Indonesia. Both new states were guided by corporatist philosophies that privileged the authority of the state over the rights of the individual and empowered the military and both saw this as extending into the religious sphere. There are, however, important differences between the two nations, not least with respect to Islam and civil society. Nevertheless, overall the two are more alike each other than they are any other large Muslim nations, despite being at opposite ends of the Muslim world and having very different histories.

Yilmaz (2005) points out that Ataturk's thinking about the role of religion in modern society was strongly influenced by the ideas of Emile Durkheim mediated though his intellectual mentor Ziya Gokalp, who had translated Durkheim's works into Turkish. Inspired by Durkheim, Gokalp argued that Islam should play a vital role in unifying the Turkish nation and contributing to its moral health. Islam was seen as being both a matter of individual conviction and, with proper oversight by the state, the basis of a civil religion that would help the individual to rise above narrow personal and family interests and contribute to the greater good of the nation state.

The Directorate of Religious Affairs is today a major bureaucracy in the Turkish Republic. It has more than 80,000 employees and controls approximately 86,000 mosques (Yilmaz 2005). Many of these mosques have been built by local communities through charitable donations but by law they are required to come under the authority and teaching of a state *imam*, or leader. The sermon that these *imam* read during the Friday noon assemblies, when, according to Islamic teaching, all able-bodied men are expected join the worship service, is prepared by the Directorate of Religious Affairs and distributed throughout all mosques in Turkey. The imam, all of whom are officially employed as civil servants, receive their final *khafiz* training in classical Islamic scholarship in state-run programs at institutes of higher learning.

Fethullah Gulen, Anatolian Islam, Milli Gorus Islamism and the state

Fethullah Gulen trained and worked as a state imam (1959 to 1981) and needs to be understood in that context. His official training means that he works from a solid scholarly base and has a strong command of Qur'an and Sunnah (the lived example of the Prophet Muhammad, as communicated in the Qur'an and in the four main *hadith* collections that record the sayings and behavior of the Prophet) and classical Islamic learning. This is significant for several reasons, not least because it predisposes him to be critical of Islamist reductionism (Aktay, 2003).   Islamism, like other fundamentalisms in other religious communities, is generally championed by lay-people with an applied-science background (former prime minister Erbakan, for example was for years a professional physicist working in Germany, many other leaders are trained in engineering). Rarely do Islamist leaders have a social-science or humanities background and very few indeed have benefited from a formal education in classical Islamic scholarship (Kepel, 2004; Roy, 2004). Moreover, the fact that Gulen spent decades working as a state imam is a strong indication that he holds to the foundational ideals of the Turkish state. The is point is one of crucial importance because despite being highly regarded by many within and without the institutions of the Turkish state there are many who regard Gulen with great suspicion. This is particularly the case in the military and the state universities, the two great institutional pillars of Turkish secularism, but increasingly even in those circles Gulen's ideas are finding greater acceptance (Eickelman, 1998, Yavuz, 2003)

It is impossible to understand either the Gulen movement or modern Turkey as a whole without an understanding of why an Islamic intellectual such as Fethullah Gulen can be the subject of suspicion. There are essentially three reasons why many in Turkish society, and particularly in the ruling elite, view Gulen with suspicion. The first is that he is a highly influential charismatic leader without equal in contemporary Turkey.

The modern Turkish state understands charismatic authority but would like to a have a complete monopoly on it. After the death of Kemal Ataturk on November 10, 1938 successive governments together with the military, attempted, with considerable success, to leverage the respect and affection felt by the Turkish people for Ataturk to consolidate their legitimacy. The result is that the figure of Ataturk maintains a commanding position in the national psyche even in 2005, despite all that has happening in the almost seventy years since his death. Few other nationalist leaders in any nation, much less a modern democracy such as Turkey, have maintained such a high profile for so long. In the Turkish Republic the only public figures who can command significant grass-roots support are popular politicians and inspirational religious leaders. But politicians in general are not greatly respected by the Turkish people and few, if any, have genuinely board-based and enduring grass roots support. And very few religious figures command strong grass roots support either. Indeed the guardians of Turkish secularism and the managers of Turkish civil religion have worked hard for more than eight decades to ensure that charismatic authority does not play a significant role in Turkish society and Turkish religion (Lewis, 1968).

Today there only two modern Islamic leaders who can be said to the grass roots support of hundreds thousands of ordinary Turks as household names and beloved teachers. The first of

these men is Bediuzzaman Said Nursi (1876-1960), the great Sufi scholar whose popular and stirring thematic commentary of the Qur'an, the *Risale-i Nur*, is read and studied by millions of people, many of whom all across Turkey and around the world meet to read and discuss it in regular reading groups (Abu-Rabi, 1995; Markham and Ozdemir, 2005; Vahide, 2005, Yavuz, 2005a). According to some estimates Nursi is thought to have as many as six million followers today (Yavuz, 2003: 11). Despite being a committed patriot and nationalist, who fought in the war of independence and supported the leadership of Kemal Ataturk, Nursi endured decades of persecution by the state. The second man is of course Fethullah Gulen, who is thought to have a loose following of several million people.[5] The relationship between these two men will explored later in this paper, in order to understand both Gulen's thought and the socio-political context in which he and his movement operate today (Kosebalaban, 2003).

The second reason that Gulen is viewed with suspicion is that his critics, most of who appear not to be very familiar with his writing and ideas, see him as promoting a different kind of Islam to that recognized and approved by the state. This apprehension is largely based on a false understanding. In fact Gulen is not so much advocating a different kind of Islam but rather an Islam that reaches more deeply into peoples lives and transforms them to become not just better believers but better citizens. Nevertheless, the shorthand criticism of the Gulen movement is that it is promoting fanaticism. Gulen and his followers might be, in many respects, socially conservative and they are often earnest, but as we shall see when we study Gulen's thought later in this paper, they are certainly not fanatics (Eickelman, 1998)

Gulen is clearly not a fanatic; he is far too consistently moderate in everything he does and says for that to be the case. Rather, in language familiar to the British, he might be described as a loyal churchman advocating not for dissent but rather for greater piety. Indeed in many respects it can be said that the Gulen movement in Muslim Turkey parallels the contemporary evangelical movement in the Christian West. In other respects, such as in the pioneering of quality education, the development of ethical banking and media enterprises, and in the encouragement of personal integrity and philanthropic generosity from businessmen whilst at the same time providing them with a network of mutual encouragement and support, Turkey's Gulen movement resembles the muscular Puritanism of 17th and 18th century America.

There is a sense, however in which drawing a distinction between the 'civil religion' Lausannian Islam advocated by the Turkish state and the deeply personal and passionate 'Anatolian Islam' advocated by Nursi and Gulen does make sense. Ihsan Yilmaz argues that "… despite the rhetoric, there has always been an official version of Islam in Turkey that this study calls Lausannian Islam. Even though the Turkish state has always desired to have only the state version of Islam, unofficial Islam has persisted … two versions of the unofficial Islam: political Islam of the *Milli Gorus* movement and Anatolian Islam of the faith-based Fethullah Gulen movement." (Yilmaz 2005: 385)

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The third, and in many ways most interesting reason for the cloud of doubt over the Gulen movement is that many mistakenly assume that it is an Islamist movement and that it is some how linked with, or at least sympathetic to, the Islamist parties of the Milli Gorus. Yilmaz observers that:

> "… Even though Gulen consistently reiterates that he has no political agenda, that he is against the instrumentalist use of religion in politics, that his emphasis is on the individual and so on, the militarist elite who see themselves as the staunch guardians of the regime regard Gulen and his movement as a potential threat to the state. Those fears seemed confirmed two years ago when television stations broadcast excerpts from videocassettes in which he seemed to urge his sympathizers to "patiently and secretly" infiltrate the government. He also made some vague statements which were somewhat critical of the Turkish establishment. Gulen said he his words had been taken out of context, and some altered; he said he had counseled patience to sympathizers faced with corrupt civil servants and administrators intolerant of workers who were practicing Muslims. "Statements and words were picked with tweezers and montaged to serve the purposes of whoever was behind this," he said. The militarist elite remains suspicious and claims that he seeks to gain political power over state institutions, including the army. The reason why Gulen employs such vague language on certain issues is understandable give that the authoritarian state does not tolerate any rivals in the social sphere, one of the major reasons for Turkish civil society's immaturity and weakness in the face of the almighty state.
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> To sum up, Gulen has achieved autonomy from state power and been able to mobilize a large segment of society; he is of Islamic background with which the laicist state has felt uneasy, and he will always be depicted as a potential threat by some." (Yilmaz 2005: 398).

Another seasoned observer of the Gulen movement and Turkish society, Elisabeth Ozdalga, argues that the paranoia about Gulen has been carefully managed and manipulated as circumstances permitted. This process reached a high point in 1999 in the wake of the 'soft coup' of February 1997 that saw the provocatively Islamist government of Necmettin Erbakan resign in the face of pressure from the military. Despite the fact that Gulen had often been critical of Erbakan's policies and political style the interregnum that followed the coup was seen as good time to move against the other pole of non-state Islam.

> "After the 1995 elections and the coming to power of the Welfare Party in June 1996, the winds turned chillier. With Turgut Ozal gone, the balance of power at the political pinnacle shifted more in favor of the military. The well-known decision of the National Security Council on February 28, 1997, that led to a long list of demands on the sitting Welfare Party/True Path Party government led to Prime Minister Necmettin Erbakan's resignation five months later.
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> The mopping-up operation touched the Gulen community in June 1999, after a number of videocassettes containing Gulen's speeches or *vaiz*(es) had been televised on one of the major channels, atv. For a couple of weeks after the first showing on June 18, these cassettes became the main topic of interest in all the media, including newspapers, TV and radio.

> … These media reports were accompanied by assurances from the highest authorities, including the State Security Court Prosecutor (Devlet Guvenlik Mahkkemesi Savcisi), Nuh Mete Yuksel, that a court case was underway against Fethullah Gulen in which the accused would face the death penalty." (Ozdalga 2005: 439-40)

Gulen, who suffers from severe diabetes and advanced coronary illness, had traveled to the United State for treatment in March of 1999.   Once there he was advised not travel again until his condition improved. Today Gulen lives with friends in a small community in rural Pennsylvania where he continues to write.

Gulen was living in Pennsylvania when the accusations against him reached court in Ankara the following year.   In October 2000 Turkey's only English daily newspaper, *The Turkish Daily News,* reported:

> "An Islamic preacher faced trial in absentia on Monday in a case Turks hope will reveal his true identity: an Islamic leader planning to overthrow Turkey's government or a benefactor preaching peace, dialogue and tolerance.
> State prosecutors accuse Fethullah Gulen of leading an Islamic brotherhood that secretly aimed to topple Turkey's secular system and establish an Islamic state. They say he systematically planted followers in key positions within the civil service and runs schools to brainwash youngsters.
> (Fethullah Gulen Trial Opens in Ankara, Turkish Daily News, 10.17.2000, http://en.fgulen.com/a.page/press/news/2000/a1066.html)

The prosecutor, Nuh Mete Yuksel, had prepared a list of substantial but rather general charges against Gulen:

> "Yuksel opened the case against the renowned Islamic scholar last week. The latest suit claims that Gülen "camouflages his methods with a democratic and moderate image"; that Gülen is trying to overthrow Turkey's secular system and "create a theocratic state based on Islamic dictatorship"; that Gulen's chain of schools is being used to "brainwash" Turkish youth into supporting the establishment of an Islamic state; that Gulen's plan is to use the country's youth as tools toward this objective; that Gülen is behind the infiltration of fundamentalist radicals into the ranks of the state and municipal public service; that Gülen makes a deliberate effort to "end Turkey's position in the world as a secular, democratic and social state governing by rule of law"; that Gülen supports the idea of an elected presidency to ease the path towards transformation of the country into a theocratic dictatorship; that, in and out of the country, Gulen's aim is to create leadership for the projected future dictatorship. This has included a concerted effort to appear in foreign circles as a spokesman for the Islamic element in Turkey; that Gülen has encouraged not only wealthy individuals, but also major multi-partner enterprises to join his movement; and that Gulen's contacts with politicians have served him in obtaining state financing for many of these projects. The suit filed by the Chief Prosecutor asks for the capital

punishment but later he changed it to a 5- to 10-year term of imprisonment for Gülen under the controversial anti-terrorism legislation."
(http://en.fgulen.com/a.page/press/news/2000/c186.html)

The *Turkish Daily News* had earlier reported on some uncharacteristically outspoken comments made by Fethullah Gulen in an interview with *The New York Times*:

"In a written response to questions from The New York Times, Mr. Gulen recently broke a year of public silence about the accusations against him. He described the charges as fabrications by a "marginal but influential group that wields considerable power in political circles."
He said he was not seeking to establish an Islamic regime but did support efforts to ensure that the government treated ethnic and ideological differences as a cultural mosaic, not a reason for discrimination.
"Standards of democracy and justice must be elevated to the level of our contemporaries in the West," said Mr. Gulen, who has been receiving medical care in the United States for the past year and said his health prevented his return to Turkey.
('Turkey Assails a Revered Islamic Moderate', Turkish Daily News, 08.25.2000, http://en.fgulen.com/a.page/press/news/2000/a731.html)

In November 2003, the State Security Council Court in which Gulen's case was being heard moved to delay the verdict in the trial for a period of five years, after which time it would automatically be cancelled unless fresh accusations are made. The effect of this was to place Gulen on a virtual 'good-behavior bond' without giving his defense team opportunity to clear his name.

Even six years on from the media campaign and trial there continues to be a significant level of residual mistrust of the Gulen movement, suggesting that even if the accusations were not fully accepted by most they nevertheless did considerable damage (Cetin, 2005; Kosebalaban, 2003).

Given the broad support for the Gulen movement at all levels of society and the influence of its various media and business components both in Turkey and across the Turkic world it is important to make sense of these charges and to attempt to establish if they have any validity at all. What is a stake however, goes well beyond Turkey and Turkish interests. For if it can be demonstrated that the Gulen movement is operating deceptively and that its philanthropic and educational endeavors are ultimately cogwheels in a machine for gaining political power then it is not only the Turkish world that is affected but all of the Muslim world, and in fact the entire global community. This is because the Gulen movement represents a prima facie case for optimism about the potential for progressive Islamic thought to bring about social change through civil sphere activism (Cetin, 2005; Saritoprak, 2005) . Apart from the Gulen and Nursi groups in Turkey and Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama, and related non-governmental groups (NGOs), in Indonesia, there is very little comparable civil society activism anywhere else. Instead, most civil society activism in the Muslim world is directed

towards the long-term goal of achieving political power and using legislative 'Shari'ah reforms' to change society and culture (Tibi, 1990; 1997).

The media campaign against the Gulen movement in mid-1999 was premised on the assertion that, despite outward appearances and claims to the contrary, Gulen and his followers were covert Islamists. No doubt many in Turkish society are genuinely confused about this matter. There is no question that Gulen has great charismatic authority and that, in several critical aspects, his Anatolian Islam parts company from the Turkish Republic's Lausannian Islam. Both of these facts might trouble certain deeply conservative or reactionary elements in the Turkish state but in themselves they do not represent significant grounds for concern (Cetin, 2005).

Turkey has made substantial progress down the road to a achieving a mature and stable democracy and a vital element in this progress has been the growth of civil society institutions that stand independent from the state. Like the United States of America, Turkey might be a robustly secular nation but it is also a deeply religious one (Yavuz, 2003). Given the persistence of religious faith and conviction in Turkish society, and the foundational role of Islam in Turkish culture, the development of independent Islamic movements is fully to be expected. That some should align with the Islamist ideology of the Milli Gorus groups is also to be fully expected. The big question is whether movements like the Gulen movement represent a genuine alternative to Islamism. Answering this question requires careful examination of where Gulen claims to stand, what it is that constitutes and shapes his axial ideas, and how the movement around him has grown and developed. But first it requires that we understand what Islamism is, where it has come from and how it has grown and developed.

Islamism in the global historical context

Although the term 'Islamism' is of recent coinage, the distinction between Islamists – those who want legislated recognition and a direct role for Islam in the state – and other Muslims – who are, to varying degrees, quiescent or intuitively apprehensive about the state playing a direct role in 'the affairs of the heart' – dates back to the beginning of the twentieth century (Berman, 2003; Kepel, 2004; Roy, 2004).

The shift towards using the term 'Islamism' instead of 'fundamentalism' in both journalistic and academic discourse reflects greater precision in thinking about political Islam but there is still considerable scope for confusion because of the way in which the term is used (Shepard, 2004). The September 11 attacks in 2001, and the continued activities of groups like al-Qaeda and Jemaah Islamiyah since then, have precipitated a growing awareness of the need to distinguish between militant Islamism and political Islamism. In fact it probably also makes good sense to recognize two very different kinds of political Islamism: one basically radical (that is to say, aspiring to profound 'roots up' changes in state and society) and one basically conservative (generally concerned with arresting 'social decline' and preserving religious influence and symbolism in public life).

What is meant by 'Islamism' is essentially a political ideology (or ideologies), and the related political movement/s, inspired by a narrow, political, reading of Islam. This would suggest that Islamism is quintessentially a modern movement and indeed it first emerges in the in a complete form in the middle of the twentieth century. Nevertheless, the linking of Islam and politics has a history that goes back almost fourteen centuries before this to the time of the Prophet Muhammad, for Islam began as a religious movement that, out of necessity quickly gained certain political aspects.

The message brought by the Prophet Muhammad was an inspiring one, but it was also an uncompromising one in that it left no room for the traditional tribal animism of the Arab world and challenged existing social structures and as result soon meant that in 622 AD/CE the Prophet and his nascent community were obliged to emigrate (*hijra*) from Mecca to Medina (an occasion so significant that it marks the beginning of the Muslim calendar) and to defend themselves against attack (Ruthven 2000, 46-59). At the same time many people were drawn to his message and the community continued to grow rapidly to the point where it by 632, the year of the Prophet's death, it controlled the western half of the Arabian peninsula along the whole length of the Red Sea. By 656 Muslim communities exercised control of virtually the entire area of the modern Middle East, from Egypt in the west to Persia in the east, from the Arabia Sea in the south to the Caucasus in the north. By 750 the Muslim world began at the Atlantic coast of Northern Africa, stretched eastwards as far as Gujarat and northwards as far as the Aral sea. The early *ummah*, or Muslim community, was very brittle and vulnerable to internecine squabbling between the many tribes and families that had until recently lived in enmity. Muhammad and 'the four rightly-guided *caliph'*, or leaders, who followed him maintained the unity of the community by constantly pressing outwards, and given the nature of the world in which they lived missionary expansion was frequently accompanied by battle and the signing of treaties. During this formative period political, military and religious affairs were naturally interwoven. After the death of Ali, the fourth *caliph*, in 661, religious leadership and political leadership developed separately and distinctly and, at least in Sunni communities, the *ulama* and the sultans kept largely to their separate, though contiguous, spheres of interest.

As an essentially modern movement Islamism developed very much in reaction Western colonialism in the middle of the 20th century. Islamism's seminal thinkers and activists were associated with Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood and with Pakistan's Jamaat-i-Islami. The foundations were laid by the Hasan al-Banna who established the Brotherhood in 1928, and Sayyid Abu l'Ala Maududi (1903-79) who founded Jamaat-i-Islami in 1941.[6]

Maududi's analysis and systemization of Islamic thought is simplistic and reductionistic but, as is often the case with fundamentalist writers, this is part of his appeal. Maududi wrote in a clear and accessible fashion for lay-people not scholars. Beginning with his first book, *Jihad in Islam*, written in Urdu in the 1920s, Maududi quickly established a wide following and, unusually for an Urdu writer, his work was translated into Arabic and in English and sold strongly around the Muslim world, including Indonesia where he acquired a keen following amongst young modernists. Maududi combined Lenin's idea of a vanguard with Muhammad's small band of early believers who joined him in his *hijra* from Mecca (Kepel 2002, 32-6). Whilst he did not go so far as advocating Marxist-Leninist style revolution

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[6] The contemporary usage of *santri* and *abangan* was popularized by Clifford Geertz (1960).

Maududi's thought was certainly radical. He firmly believed that the West, and westernized secular Muslim communities, were pathetically submerged in the same state of *jahiliyah*, or spiritual ignorance, as the pre-Islamic Arabs, and that once a critical mass of zealous Muslims came together all of the modern world's problems would find their panacea in the true Islamic society of a Muslim state.

For all his talk of jihad Maududi was not actually promoting underground activism, rather he believed in changing society through direct participation in the political process. Islamist thinking within Indonesia's Masyumi was strongly influenced by the ideas of Maududi. The foundations for this were laid in the first decades of the twentieth century when the seminal modernist ideas of Egyptian intellectual Muhammad 'Abduh (1849-1905) were transmitted to Southeast Asia through the filter of 'Abduh's disciple Rashid Rida (Eliraz, 2004). 'Abduh had extensive experience of, and affection for, European society and culture and had began to rethink Islam after having been freed from 'the bonds of literalism' and the 'poison of ignorance' by a Sufi teacher (Ruthven 2004, 301) was a truly progressive and liberal thinker. Rida, however, who neither read western literature nor visited Europe was conservative to the point being reactionary on many issues. 'Abduh's primary concern was the renewal of Islamic thought through opening up 'the gates of *itjihad* (interpretation)', and promoting fresh endeavors in Qur'anic exegisis. Rida's central obsession was the political liberation of Muslim society.

Though they laid the foundations it was Sayyid Qutb (1906–66), not al-Banna or Maududi who was to become the towering giant of Islamist thought (Berman 2003, 60–102; Binder 1988, 170-205, Shepard, 2003). Qutb combined the revolutionary militarism of al-Banna's Muslim Brotherhood with Maududi's radical utopianism (Ruthven 2000, 311-6). Qutb's revolutionary radicalism was fired until rock-hard in the crucible of incarceration. He used his experience of imprisonment, torture and finally execution to build his reputation of as willing martyr (*shahid*) who gladly laid down his life for the cause, amplifying his revolutionary message to the point where it reverberated around the world. Although given the opportunity to flee into exile he chose to remain in Cairo and meet his fate. His younger brother Muhammad Qutb, however, along with many of the Brotherhood's other key activists fled to safety in Saudi Arabia where Sayyid Qutb's ideas found fertile ground. It is no accident that when he became an influential Islamic academic in Saudi Arabia, one of Muhammad Qutb's keenest students was an idealistic young man known as Usama bin-Laden (Berman 2003, 63)

The ideas of Sayyid Qutb energized Muslim Brotherhood radicalism in Egypt and related movements across the Muslim world in the 1960s, 70s and early 80s, but it achieved its maximum catalytic effect when it was combined with the devotion of thousands of angry young Saudis and the circumstances of the jihad against the Soviets in Afghanistan in the 1980s. This form of radical Islamism, the form that inspires al-Qaeda and Jemaah Islamiyah, is often called Jihadi Islamism (and sometimes Jihadi Salafism, because Saudi neo-Wahhabi extremists choose to call themselves Salafi after the 'salaf as-salih', the 'pure companions' of the Prophet). As we noted above, we now know that Jihadi Islamism has a much stronger following in Indonesia than was previously thought.

It is important to distinguish between the terrorist ideology of Jihadi Islamism and the radical but non-militant, political Islamism of political parties such as the members of Turkey's Milli Gorus movement and parties such as Indonesia's Crescent Moon and Star Party (PBB) and

Prosperous Justice Party (PKS) which appear to be more influenced by the model of Maududi's Jamaati-i-Islami, which for all its radicalism never went underground but instead remained a legitimate political party, than they are by that of Qutb's Muslim Brotherhood (Kepel 2002, 35). It also makes good sense to distinguish between the radical political Islamism of PBB and PKS and the conservative political Islamism of many who support Indonesia's United Development Party (PPP). The latter are much more interested in preserving the symbolic presence of Islam in Indonesian culture than they are in radically transforming Indonesian society.

Gulen's rejection of Islamism

Bediuzzaman Said Nursi famously exclaimed "I take refuge in God from Satan and politics."[7] Juxtaposing politics with Satan might seem like a rather flamboyant exaggeration but given all that Nursi suffered in his lifetime as a result of politics it seems eminently forgivable. Fethullah Gulen's experience of the slings and arrows of outrageous political fortune involves few of the physical privations that Nursi endured but it has nevertheless seen him taken into custody for several months in 1971 (detained, but never charged and put on trial – as there was no clear case against him - under the prevailing marshal law provisions), face years with the threat of arrest hanging over him and, more recently, years of self-imposed exile away from Turkey (Vahide, 2005).

Like Nursi before him, Gulen can be said to have reason enough to regard politics as a sometimes diabolical business. But does he believe that Islam contains an alternative model of politics? The evidence that he does not is plentiful and compelling and comes from several different angles. Firstly, there are numerous passages in his writing like the one below in which he directly refutes the Islamist claims for Islamic politics:

> "Islam does not propose a certain unchangeable form of government or attempt to shape it. Instead, Islam established fundamental principles that orient a government's general character, leaving it to the people to choose the type and form of government according to time and circumstances." (Gulen, 2001)

Elsewhere he rejects the totalizing ideological character of Islamist political thought and activism and argues instead in favor of democracy:

> "… This vision of Islam as a totalising ideology is totally against the spirit of Islam, which promotes the rule of law and openly rejects oppression against any segment of society. This spirit also promotes actions for the betterment of society in accordance with the view of the majority.
>
> Those who follow a more moderate pattern also believe that it would be much better to introduce Islam as a complement to democracy instead of presenting it as an ideology. Such an introduction of Islam may play an important role in the Muslim

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[7] Said Nursi, Risale-i Nur Kulliyati, vol II, Istanbul: Nesil Yayinlari, 1996, p.1797.

world through enriching local forms of democracy and extending it in such a way that helps humans develop and understanding of the relationship between the spiritual and material worlds. I believe that Islam also would enrich democracy in answering the deep needs of humans, such as spiritual satisfaction, which cannot be fulfilled except through the remembrance of the Eternal One." (Gulen 2005: 452)

Gulen's rejection of Islamism is not based merely on strategic considerations or on personal preference. Rather, he believes the Islamist claims to have found political guidance in scripture to represent a gross misunderstanding of the very nature the Qur'an and one the dangerously distorts the believer's approach to scripture:

"The Qur'an is a translation of the book of the universe, which comes from the divine commands of creation, an interpretation of the world of the unseen, of the visible and invisible. It is an explanation of the reflections of the divine names on earth and in the heavens. It is a prescription for the various problems of the Islamic world. It is a guide for bliss in this life and in the life to come. It is a great guide for the travellers in this world moving towards the hereafter. It is an inexhaustible source of wisdom. Such a book should not be reduced to the level of political discourse, nor should it be considered a book about political theories or forms of state. To consider the Qur'an as an instrument of political discourse is a great disrespect for the Holy Book and is an obstacle that prevents people from benefiting from this deep source of divine grace." (Gulen 2005: 456)

Aside from directly criticizing Islamist political thought in his many books and articles Gulen also frequently argues is favor of democracy. He is always careful to make clear his position that some forms of democracy are more preferable than others and that democracy itself is no panacea for humanity's problems. Nevertheless, his position on democracy can be described as being a cautiously optimistic one.

"Democracy has developed over time. Just as it has gone through many different stages, it will continue to go through other stages in the future to improve itself. Along the way, it will be shaped into a more humane and just system, one based on righteousness and reality. If human beings are considered as a whole, without disregarding the spiritual dimension of their existence and their spiritual needs, and without forgetting that human life is not limited to this mortal life and that all people have a great craving for eternity, democracy could reach its peak of perfection and bring even more happiness to humanity. Islamic principles of equality, tolerance, and justice can help it do just that." (Unal and Williams, 2000: 137)

Based on his numerous and generally consistent comments in favor of modern democratic politics and against Islamist readings of the Qur'an and Sunnah that find a blueprint for an Islamic state in the pages of scripture and the life of the Prophet it is clear that Gulen is not an Islamist. It might, nevertheless, be argued, as some in Turkey as certainly inclined to do so, that given that Islamism, in at least some of its forms, condones subterfuge and dissembling in the name of political expediency, it is impossible to exclude the possibility that Gulen is merely pretending to reject Islamist ideology.

There are, however, two things that enable us to have confidence Gulen is not a secret Islamist. Firstly, whilst it is true that there are many cases of Islamist politicians and activists disguising their true convictions and down-playing their radical intentions, or aspirations, to profoundly alter the legal fabric of the state, it is rare for any Islamist to completely denounce Islamist epistemology in the manner that Gulen does. If he were merely making the claim to be a very moderate Islamist who was completely committed to the democratic process it would be reasonable to retain some doubts about his true position.

Indonesia's PKS, for example claims to be inherently moderate and absolutely committed to democracy but there are good reasons for being apprehensive about the longer-term intentions of at least some people within the PKS leadership. For they themselves acknowledge that they are in the business of "planting both bananas and coconuts": they recognize that campaigning on law-order-issues can deliver a quick political crop whilst the business of incrementally introducing 'Shari'ah reforms' will take rather longer to yield fruit. Similar arguments might also be made about certain Turkish politicians and political advisors who were openly Islamist in the Erbakan government but now claim to have left all that behind them. On the other hand, it needs to be acknowledged that people and parties do change and that PKS in Indonesia might well follow the lead of Turkey's Prime Minister Erdogan and other former Islamists in moderating their views. After all, political life in western democracies in the second half of the twentieth century is filled with examples of erstwhile radicals and revolutionaries mellowing into moderation or even completely reversing their positions.

Gulen, Sufism and tolerance

The second thing that represents compelling evidence that Gulen is not a secret Islamist is the consistent philosophical orientation of his entire body of thought. Virtually every aspect of Gulen's thought is shaped by Sufism and by its emphasis on motive, intention and the heart rather than outward conformity to law (Saritoprak 2003; 2005a; 2005b; Michel, 2005, 2005b). His entire philosophy of societal transformation focuses on the development of individuals from within, in both heart and mind, in sharp contrast to the Islamist focus on changing society from without through reforms to political systems that allow the transformation of legal frameworks.

Ironically, Gulen's unambiguously Sufistic orientation does not let him off the hook either, at least with some within the Turkish state, for beginning with Said Nursi and the foundation of the republic Sufism has been viewed with deep suspicion. It fact it continues to be illegal in Turkey to found a new Sufi brotherhood or religious order (*tarekat*) or even belong to one. As Zeki Saritoprak has argued, Fethullah Gulen is undoubtedly a "Sufi in his own way" but does this mean that is concealing something from the state? (Saritoprak, 2003). Gulen speaks very openly about this matter, arguing that:

> "The religious orders are institutions that appeared in the name of representing Sufism six centuries after our Prophet, upon whom be peace. They have their own rules and

structures. Just as I never joined a Sufi order, I have never had any relationship with one." (Gulen in Michel 2005: 344, from L.E. Webb, *Fethullah Gulen: Is There More to Him than Meets the Eye?*, Patterson, N.J: Zinnur Books, 1983: 103)

Whilst Gulen rejects the charge of secretly belonging to a Sufi order is very open about his conviction that Sufism represents the very heart and soul of Islam. For Gulen it is impossible to be a mature and balanced Muslim if one rejects or neglects the insights and emphasis of Sufism:

> "As a religion, Islam naturally emphasizes the spiritual realm. It takes the training of the ego as a basic principle. Asceticism, piety, kindness and sincerity are essential to it. In the history of Islam, the discipline that most on these matters was Sufism. Opposing this would be opposing the essence of Islam." (Gulen in Michel 2005: 348, from Webb 103)

Sufism is often presented as representing as one of several alterative approaches to Islamic practice. For Gulen Sufism, or at least a substantive element of the contemplative spirituality associated with it (for definitions of where Sufism begins are much debated and greatly dependent upon context), is not an optional extra but an essential component in the practice of Islam.

> "An initiate or traveler on the path (*salik*) never separates the outer observance of Shari'ah from its inner dimension, and therefore observes all of the requirements of both the outer and the inner dimensions of Islam. Through such observance, he or she travels toward the goal in utmost humility and submission." (Gulen, "Sufism and its Origins", *The Fountain*, July-September, 1999)

Gulen does not regard himself as being an innovator in this area. In fact, in almost every aspect of this thought, Gulen is advancing no truly novel ideas. He is deeply committed to the view that all Islamic thought must find foundation in the Qur'an and Sunnah and although he supports *ijtihad*, or the ongoing process of interpreting the Qur'an and Sunnah he sees this resulting in the adaptation of the way in which scriptural principles are applied rather than breakthroughs in the formulation of doctrine. Here again, there are strong parallels between Gulen's thinking and that of mainstream evangelical Christian thinking in North America. The self-understanding in both cases is one of diligently bringing forth the great truths of the faith, truths that have come down through the centuries via a chain of faithful preachers and teachers, to a new generation of believers. Sufism lies at the heart of Gulen's thought and he understands this as being neither novel nor idiosyncratic but rather as being in keeping with the faith of his fathers and grounded in the Qur'an and Sunnah:

> "[*Tasawwuf*] is not contradictory with any of the Islamic ways based on the Book and the *Sunnah*. Far from being contradictory, it has its source, just like the other religious sciences, in the Book and the *Sunnah* and the conclusions of the purified scholars of the early period of Islam drawn from the Qur'an and the Sunnah – *ijtihad*." (Gulen, *Key Concepts in the Practice of Sufism*: 9)

It is not in the discrete components of his thought but rather in their application, and in his attitude and vision, that Gulen is breaking new ground. Gulen is, of course, aware that he is taking a very different line to that taken by the great majority of contemporary leaders in the Muslim world, particularly in the Arab world to Turkey's south. The distinctive differences in his thinking, however, are not the product of his innovation but rather reflect the character of Anatolian Islam. Although he is gracious and respectful of Islamic intellectuals around the world there is no escaping the fact that he proud of the achievements of Turkish Islamic thought and culture and quietly confident that Turkish Islam represents the most mature and insightful understanding of the spirit of Islam:

> "Turkish Islam is composed of the main, unchanging principles of Islam found in the Qur'an and Sunnah, as well as in the forms that its aspects open to interpretation assumed during Turkish history, together with Sufism … This is why Turkish Islam always has been broader, deeper, more tolerant and inclusive, and based on love." (Gulen in Ali Unal and Alphonse Williams, *Advocate of Dialogue: Fethullah Gulen*, Fairfax, VA: The Fountain, 2000: 43)

Tolerance, inclusiveness, love and compassion represent the central themes of Gulen's thought. Some of his critics would argue that this is all part of an elaborate ploy to win the confidence of outsiders both in Turkey and abroad. If these elements were found to represent a mere dusting of sweeteners on the outside of a less palatable package then it would be right to question their presence. But a study of Gulen's writings reveals these elements as penetrating right to the core of his thought, or better, as originating from the very center of his thinking (Kurtz, 2005).   The sweetness is no mere surface dressing but runs all the way through. Put simply, Gulen would argue that love is at the very heart of Islam and hence represents the central theme of Sufism, whose genius lies in its interpreting of the spirit of Islam, and must therefore be very axis around which all of his work revolves.

> "There is no weapon in the universe stronger than the weapon of love." (Gulen in Saritoprak and Griffith 2005: 334)

For Gulen true religion (which for Gulen is by no means limited only to Islam) is concerned with true humanity and results in humans achieving their highest potential by embracing compassion and love in the way that God always intended them to do so.

> "Compassion is the beginning of being: without it everything is chaos. Everything has come into existence through compassion and by compassion it continues to exist in harmony … Man has a responsibility to show compassion to all living beings, as a requirement of being human. The more he displays compassion, the more exalted he becomes, while the more he resorts to wrongdoing, oppression and cruelty, the more he is disgraced and humiliated, becoming a shame to humanity." (Gulen, *Towards the Lost Paradise*, 1996: 40-2).

> "Those who close the road of tolerance are beasts who have lost their humanity …. Forgiveness and tolerance will heal most of our wounds, but only if this diving

> instrument is in the hands of those who understand its language." (Gulen, 2000, "Forgiveness", *The Fountain Magazine*, Issue 30 April - June 2000)

Gulen's contemporary retelling of the message of Anatolian Islam is built upon the foundation laid at the beginning of the twentieth century by Bediuzzaman Said Nursi and set forth in his six-volume topical commentary of the Qur'an, *Risale-i Nur.* Although both men would argue that they are but messengers bringing forth the wisdom of Anatolian Islam as expounded in earlier generations beginning with Mevlana Jalaluddin Rumi, the thirteenth century Persian poet who spent most of his life teaching and writing in Konya, central Anatolia (Franklin Lewis, *Rumi: Past and Present, East and West; The life, teaching and poetry of Jalal al-Din Rumi*, New York: One World Publications, 2000), as twentieth century intellectuals they were uniquely tasked with speaking to the modern world. Here again it is very clear that Gulen's thought, as with Nursi's thought, is distinctively different in orientation and tone from that of many of their contemporaries. Islamism is very much a product of modernity but it tends to look backwards, full of nostalgia and regret at what has been lost and inclined to blame the loss on the moral degradation that it sees as being inherent in modernity. Nursi and Gulen, and the other hand, look forward. Their thought is very much a product of traditional scholarship meeting with modern learning and is both more deeply rooted in earlier Islamic thought and more forward-looking and positive in its engagement with the modern world (Kuru, 2003). Indeed, the level of optimism expressed by them regarding modern world is truly remarkable.

> "The modern world will be shaped by systems and approaches which cherish universal values which consider affection, tolerance, understanding and unity as basics … which prefer to overcome all hostilities, hatred and wrath by friendship, tolerance and reconciliation; which undertake the mission of delivering culture and knowledge for the benefit of humanity; which can create a balance between the individual and the society without sacrificing one for the other; which have a great vision without falling into the trap of utopias and without leaving realities aside; which believe in the merit of keeping determinant factors such as religion, language, race free from any compulsory pressure." (Gulen in Michel 2005: 356).

The development of the Gulen *hizmet* as a civil society movement

Both Said Nursi and Fethullah Gulen can be described as progressive Islamic thinkers in that they are forward-looking and in their writing seek to apply the insights of Anatolian Islam to modern Turkish society with the intention of both addressing the spiritual gaps that appeared in Turkey's rush to modernize and supporting the modernization and development of Turkish society through education and the enriching of public discourse.

Said Nursi was born around 1876, which meant that he was a student and young man at the end of the Ottoman era and a soldier during the First World War. His formal education was in classical Islamic scholarship but he read avidly and widely in the sciences and humanities and was keen to encourage the development of education in the Republic.   His outspoken style, his defense of religion's place in modern society and his charisma and Sufi manner,

however, made him an unwelcome presence in Ankara in 1922 and he spent much of the next four decades until his death in various states of exile. Being ostracized was deeply unpleasant for Nursi and for the several generations of his followers who were also affected but in terms of his intellectual output and lasting contribution to Islamic thought it proved very fruitful.

Fethullah Gulen came of age six decades after Said Nursi and was consequently faced with very different circumstances in which to communicate ideas and grow a social movement. Like Nursi, Gulen too was born in small village in Eastern Anatolia, but unlike Nursi he was born near a major city, Ezurum, at the crossroads of ancient trade routes. Unlike Nursi, Gulen does not have an ethnic Kurdish heritage even though his grandparents came from Eastern Anatolia near Lake Van and not far from Nursi's village, but given Nursi's deep nationalism, which Gulen shares, this does not seem to be a difference anywhere as consequential as it might first appear.

In many respects Fethullah Gulen today is carrying the mantle of Said Nursi. This is not how many followers of Nursi see it, nor is it how Gulen himself would describe it. After all, he never even met with Nursi or joined a Nursi association, much less became Nursi's disciple and heir, and his program of social activism has taken a very different course from that advocated by Nursi. Nevertheless, in his foundational ideas and philosophical orientation, and in his fraught relationship with the 'deep state', Gulen can be seen to be carrying on where Nursi left off.

There are many striking parallels between the two men. Both grew up in East Anatolian communities remote from the great cities of Ankara, Istanbul and Izmir, and evidenced deep piety from an early age. Both were taught, within the family home, to read and memorize the entire Qur'an at an early age (both Gulen's mother, Rafi'a and his father Ramiz Efendi, instructed him in reading the Qur'an and learning Arabic). Both were influenced by Sufi scholars (in his extra-curricula Islamic school Gulen was taught by a man from the Qadiri *tarekat* by the name of Muhammad Lutfi Efendi and his own father had close connections with the Naqshbandi order – so as a boy Gulen was exposed to the two major *tarekat* operating in Turkey) and became Sufis 'in their own way' as young men: basing their approach to Sufism on the example of Jalaluddin Rumi and seeking to chart a middle path between rational and socially engaged scholarship and esoteric mysticism (Sarioprak and Griffith, 2005:330). Both men rejected the idea of joining a *tarekat*, saying that whilst they respected *tarekat* such as the Naqshbandi but felt that the time for tarekat had passed, and in both cases it appears the consideration of possible political repression was not the prime reason for taking this position. Nursi and Gulen instead rejected the traditional idea of following, much less becoming, a *sheikh*, or Sufi master, and argued instead that in the modern world educated Muslims should make the Qur'an and Sunnah their master.

Both Nursi and Gulen were sent at a young age to study classical Islamic scholarship and each proved precociously gifted at understanding and memorizing the classical texts (hence the honorifics that were given to them whilst still quite young: Bediuzzaman - wonder of the age, and Hodjaeffendi - master teacher). Both men were deeply troubled by the rote-learning character of education in Turkey and became convinced at a young age of the need for

educational reform. Neither man received formal education in modern secular disciplines but both became avid and successful autodidacts in modern learning and went on to champion a synthesis of classical Islamic scholarship and modern critical thinking and scientific learning.

When Nursi was a young man in his twenties Turkey was in turmoil. The 'Young Turks' reform movement was making steady advances and in 1908 organized a successful, though limited, revolution. The turmoil continued as Turkey was drawn into war in the Balkans and then in 1914, courtesy of its alliance with Germany found itself at war with Britain and her allies. Nursi was already in his mid-thirties by the time the republic had finally achieved its independence and there was a realistic chance of his plans for educational reform and building a university on the shores of Eastern Anatolia's Lake Van. Persecution from radical-secularists in the new republic, however, saw these dreams shattered and Nursi barred from public life (Vahide 2005).

In 1959 Fethullah Gulen graduated in Edirne, in the far west of Turkey, as a state imam, and began a career within the Directorate of Religious Affairs. The previous decade had been a reasonably peaceful one under the reformist government of Prime Minister Menderes and the young Gulen had benefited from a period of greater religious freedom. This period of calm came to an abrupt end when growing tensions between government and opposition forces erupted in violent demonstrations on university campuses in April 1960. This social unrest was met with first the declaration of martial law and then a military coup that toppled the Menderes government and saw the prime minister put on trial for treason and then executed.

It is hard to imagine that these dramatic events did not leave a deep impression on Gulen who is well known for his sensitivity and compassion. Moreover, this period coincided with his two years of national service, which he commenced in November 1960, compounding the impact of this time of social turbulence and the imposition of martial law. His unit in Mamak was involved in a failed coup attempt in May 1963 and a senior officer from the Land Warfare School, Talat Aydemir, was later executed for his part in leading the coup attempt.

In his writings and interviews Gulen has always expressed a high regard for the Turkish military and respect for the role that it plays in nation building. His comments during a 1999 television interview are typical of this:

> "I was serving in the army during Talat Aydemir's coup attempt. In spite of my youth at that time, I was worried that a crack may develop in the army. Juntas within the army ranks formed during 9 March 1971 coup attempts against the army. For someone who has always looked at the armed forces as the primary guarantors of the safety and future of this country, there cannot be more worrisome events than these. Attempts are made to make the armed forces look as if it's against the religion, beliefs, and essential values of the people of this nation. I have opined against such attempts. To attempt to show that this institution (armed forces) is not and cannot be against the religion would be a disrespect to that institution in itself." ('Answers by Fethullah Gulen', *Reha Muhtar, Show TV*, 06.22.1999
> http://en.fgulen.com/a.page/press/interview)

It might be argued that it is only natural that Gulen do his best to present himself as someone that the military should not be concerned about. The above comment, after all, was made in the midst of an aggressive campaign by his enemies to present him as threat to the Turkish state. But there is much more to Gulen's comments than the desire to present himself as a non-threatening figure. Like Said Nursi, whose bravery during wartime military service was widely recognized, Gulen has a deep personal respect for the military as an institution. This respect arises out of several congruent convictions. Firstly, there for both Nursi and Gulen the Ottoman Empire represents a cultural and civilization achievement of enormous importance, and the Ottoman army was an essential component of the empire. The Turkish Armed Forces is seen as a continuation of a noble Ottoman tradition. Even without the Ottoman connection, their deeply felt nationalism inclines them to respect the role of the military in the formation of modern Turkey. At a more abstracted and personal level, both Nursi and Gulen have enormous respect for the self-discipline and self-sacrifice of military life.

Similar comments can be made about the respect felt by Abdurrahman Wahid, and other progressive Islamic intellectuals in Indonesia, for the Indonesian military as an institution, not withstanding the fact that for decades they have been outspoken in their criticism of human rights abuses by elements of the military. As with Turkey, the key role played by the antecedents of the republic's armed forces in the struggle for independence confirms upon the military a great amount of nationalist legitimacy.

Nevertheless, a key difference between Indonesia and Turkey in this area is that although the Indonesian military has generally been wary of radical Islamists (although this has not stopped some within the military of sponsoring jihadi Islamist militia when it has suited them) ultra-secularist anti-Islamic paranoia is not generally a feature of Indonesian military thinking. Indonesian generals have often been uneasy about the powerful social networks controlled by NU and Muhammadiyah but they have seldom dared to openly oppose these mass-based Islamic organizations and have generally tried to maintain good relations with their leaders.

The years that followed his military service were relatively peaceful and Gulen was able to go about his state preaching duties in Edirne, and being officially appointed as Qur'anic teacher in 1964. In 1966 he was appointed to a position at the Kestanpazari Qur'anic School in Turkey's third largest city, Izmir, on the Aegean coast.

By the end of the 1960s escalating left-right political polarization and violent confrontation had returned to Turkish society. By this time Gulen had become a very popular preacher in Izmir. He was well-liked for the way in which he engaged with contemporary ideas and issues whilst at the same time speaking with great passion. His cheerful humility and the fact that he ascending to the pulpit wearing simple white robes rather than the imposing black robes conventionally worn by state *imam*s helped endear him to many people. His highly emotional style of preaching was anything but wooden, and even if some were uncomfortable with his sometimes teary sermons few thought him to be anything less than genuine. He was also respected for his willingness to meet and talk with groups in coffee shops and other public places normally well outside the realm of a state *imam*. Inevitably, Gulen's rising

popularity and unconventional engagement with the general public incurred the suspicion of some within the military.

By 1970, after two years of violent demonstrations and eight years of high inflation, the situation had deteriorated to the point where the military began to openly warn the government that it would be forced to intervene if it was unable to reign-in the violence, Finally, in March of 1971 the government of prime minister Demirel was forced to resign and, following negations with the military, replaced with a 'more centrist' and 'more Kemalist' coalition drawn from the major parties.

Following the 'soft coup' of March 1971, in May of that year Gulen was taken into custody by military officers and detained for six months before being released without charges in November and banned from public speaking.

In 1975 fresh elections were held and Demirel was able to return to the office of prime minister, only to once again be thrown out in another 'quiet coup' on September 12, 1980 following the reemergence of the pattern of social violence that had erupted a decade earlier. At the time the military felt that the most dangerous elements in society (apart from the Kurdish Workers Party, or PKK, which had formed in the 1970s and entered into a campaign of violence in the name of Kurdish nationalism in the 1980s and 1990s that claimed the lives of more than 30,000 people) were the extreme left and the Milli Gorus Islamists. No doubt the military's suspicion of the Islamists was not entirely objective but Necmettin Erbakan did not help things by addressing a large Islamist rally in Istanbul on September 6, 1980, and calling for the restoration of the Shari'ah. The military pushed for a new constitution to address the underlying problems that had plagued the nation over the previous two decades. A new constitution was drafted and put before the public in a referendum in 1982. Fresh elections were then held at the end of the following year resulting in the ascension of Prime Minister Turgut Ozal's centrist government in November 1983.

It whilst Gulen was at Izmir in the 1970s that the Gulen movement, or *hizmet* as it came to be called (*hizmet* meaning 'service') began to take shape, although it is not clear that anyone at the time knew what it would become. Through his modern style of teaching and willingness to engage with the community around him Gulen made a deep impression on what was to become a network of local businessmen in Izmir. They supported his vision for running summer camps for university students to receive instruction in faith, science and ethics. They also helped established *dershanes* or study circles in which the Risale-i Nur and was read and discussed on a regular basis, and *isik evler,* (literally: 'lighthouses') or student households intended to assist poorer students attend university and designed to promote a community of encouragement for students to grow in their faith whilst attending university (Agai, 2003; Yavuz, 2003a). In 1979 the network in Izmir launched the movement's first journal, *Sizinti*, a monthly magazine intended to demonstrate the compatibility of science and Islam, and of religious morals and modern society (Bakar, 2005).

Gulen wrote of the *isik evler* mini-communities that:

> "The lighthouses are places where the people's deficiencies that may have been caused by their human characteristics are healed. … Thus, these houses are one workbench or one school where these directionless and confused generations who have shaped themselves according to dominant fashionable ideas are now healed and return … to their spiritual roots with its accompanying meaningful life." (Gulen, 1997:12)

The 1970s were a period of quite consolidation for the Izmir based network as ideas coalesced into a unified vision and plan of action and a committed community of supporters formed around Gulen. The *isik evler* student houses, the *dershane* reading groups and the summer camps it was not until 1983 and the more conducive atmosphere of Ozal government that the nascent movement was able to emerge from its chrysalis

In 1981 Gulen retired from his civil service career as an *imam* with the Directorate of Religious Affairs. His final sermon as a state imam was delivered on September 5, 1980, one week before the September 12 coup.   After the coup his home was raided and then Gulen, who had been staying with a friend was tracked down and interrogated for six hours. The directorate transferred Gulen to Canakale, six hours drive north of Izmir. He formally retired in March of 1981.

The centrist government of Turgut Ozal, and the prime minister himself, felt comfortable with the 'middle-way' moderation of Fethullah Gulen and focus on education and national development. The reforms of the early 1980s opened the door to the establishment of private schools and this provided new opportunities for the hizmet. In 1983 the movement opened two schools, one in Izmir and one in the historic Fatih district of Istanbul. These schools where to become models for the hundreds of *hizmet* schools which were opened in the following two decades.

It is estimated that the total number of *hizmet* schools now exceeds 500 world-wide, with a couple of hundred schools across Turkey, a further couple of hundred in the Caucuses and in Central Asia and the remainder in Europe, North America, Africa, Southeast Asia, and Australia. The precise number of the schools is difficult to ascertain as they represent the product of an organic movement in which there is no central controlling body but rather a network of local bodies intended to aid cooperation and mutual encouragement. Fethullah Gulen's relationship with the governing boards of the various schools is highly indirect and informal. The schools embody his vision of education and seek to represent his principles in concrete action but they are locally run and managed (Michel, 2003; Ozdalga, 2003).

One of the most surprising aspects of the schools is how completely secular they are. In every country in which they operate they follow local state curricula. They teach no religious subjects and there is little about them, save for an emphasis on character and moral development, which could be found in any good school, and a degree of social-conservatism reflected in dress and cross-gender socializing, to mark them as schools supported by an Islamic movement. Within Turkey and a number of other countries it would not be possible for the schools to have any religious content in their curricula. In other countries such as Australia, however, where religious schools are an accepted element of a pluralist education

system, there is nothing stopping the *hizmet* schools from following the example of Islamic schools. But in all cases the schools are committed to following a secular educational model.

Apart from the contextual factors that make it necessary for the schools to follow a secular model there are important philosophic reasons for the Gulen movement being completely comfortable with secular model. In their writings Said Nursi and Fethullah Gulen strongly encourage modern learning and particularly the study of science. They make it clear that they see education as being an essential element both in the development of modern Turkey and in the development of modern Muslims. For them there is no essential conflict between religious knowledge and scientific knowledge, and consequently there is no need for religious knowledge to be taught at the same time as other knowledge. Their only reservation about some approaches to the teaching of secular knowledge is that it not be distorted by a dogmatically materialistic and positivistic philosophy. In this respect the position of Fethullah Gulen and of the schools inspired by his vision and ideas is very similar to the position of conservative Christians in the United States. Not surprisingly one issue that particularly concerns Gulen is the positivistic approach to teaching the theory of evolution and the positioning of science to be the sole source of all knowledge (Bakar, 2005). Gulen believes that Islam teaches a middle path between rejecting modern scientific knowledge and expecting of it more than it is able to deliver:

> "However, Islam is the middle way. While it does not reject or condemn the modern scientific approach, neither does it deify it.
>   Science has been the most revered fetish or idol of humanity for nearly two centuries. Scientists once believed that they could explain every phenomenon with the findings of science and the law of causality. However, modern physics destroyed the theoretical foundations of mechanical physics by revealing that the universe is not a clockwork of certain parts working according to strict, unchanging laws of causality and absolute determinism. Rather, despite its dazzling harmony and magnificent order, it is so complex and indeterminate that when we unveil one of its mysteries, more appear. In other words, the more we learn about the universe, the greater becomes our ignorance of how it functions."
> ('The Relationship of Islam and Science and the Concept of Science', *The Fountain*, October-December 1999, Issue 28, en.fgulen.com/a.page/books/a905.html)

The *hizmet* schools represent a remarkable development in civil society within the Muslim world. The only other development that is comparable in scale and character is the development of modern schools by Indonesia's Muhammadiyah (Nakamura, 1983). The Muhammadiyah schools began to be established soon after the founding of Muhammadiyah in 1912. The rulers of the Dutch East Indies showed little interest in developing modern schooling in their colonies beyond the modicum required to educate the children of the aristocracy. Recognizing the importance of modern education, and inspired by the modernist ideas of Egypt's Muhammad 'Abduh, the petit bourgeoisie urban businessmen who represented the bulk of Muhammadiyah's membership base came to see the development of modern '*madrassa*' teaching a secular curriculum as being a religious duty.

Just as with the Muhammadiyah schools, the 'Gulen schools' represent a combination of religious philanthropy and sound business principles. Philanthropic giving by a group of businessmen who meet regularly together as members of a local community is generally the source of capital to build and operate a new school during its early years. The schools are intended to become self-funding over time through the charging of admission fees but the details of this vary according to the school's location. The *hizmet* schools within the larger Turkish cities tend to charge high, but competitive, fees and produce very high academic results. Schools in poorer districts of Turkey tend to charge considerably less but also known for the high academic achievement of their students.

Hizmet schools in developing nations in Africa and Asia generally require more substantial philanthropic support from business communities in Turkey. They also benefit from teachers who travel from Turkey to live and work in poor communities abroad to establish the schools and help maintain academic standards. Some of these teachers have worked abroad in these schools for many years and see their work as a long-term calling. Others go abroad for three to five years and then return to Turkey to teach or work in other areas of the *hizmet*. For some the overseas postings represent a pleasant change but for many working in Africa or Asia the work involves living conditions much more arduous than they are accustomed to at home. For others working in the schools in remote corners of Turkey the service represents a considerable personal sacrifice in pay and conditions (Ozdalga, 2003; Turam, 2003).

In this aspect of outreach the *hizmet* schools are without parallel anywhere else in the Muslim world. Significantly, many of the students studying at *hizmet* schools abroad are non-Muslims as in their philosophy and practice the schools welcome students from all backgrounds and maintain a non-sectarian atmosphere. Even within Turkey students report that their teachers do not talk to them about Fethullah Gulen or the hizmet. With respect to religion, the schools operate according to the principle of teaching by example (*temsil*) rather than by words (*teblig*).

Indeed the focus on *temsil* rather than *teblig* became a defining characteristic of the Gulen hizmet as it expanded beyond the limited circles that it was confined to in the 1970s and began to operate at a national level.

By the mid-1980s the *hizmet* had begun to develop national and international operations in five separate fields or lines of social engagement. Firstly, as the *hizmet* school network began to expand beyond the original schools in Izmir and Fatih the movement began to make a name for the provision of high-quality, modern, secular education. In the 1990s several tertiary-level institutions were established and today Fatih University, with campuses in Ankara and Istanbul, has achieved a solid reputation as a private university and is able to attract some of the highest-scoring high school graduates from across Turkey (and despite its name, most of its students are drawn from outside the Fatih and other *hizmet* schools).

Secondly, the *hizmet* began to move into the field of media. Concerned that much of the media was sectarian in outlook (that is to say, strongly aligned with, or owned by, right-wing or left-wing political parties and interest groups) and that it was difficult to find wholesome entertainment it was decided to develop alternatives that would be both professionally

successful and exert broad social influence in a strategic fashion.   In 1986 the daily newspaper *Zaman* (*zaman* is the Arabic word for time or era) was started. Today *Zaman* is a highly regarded quality newspaper and with a daily circulation of 500,000 copies it is one of the five largest in the country. It has agencies and correspondents around the world and prints local editions in ten different countries (Australia, Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Germany, Romania, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Macedonia, Turkmenistan and USA).   In 1995 it launched Turkey's first online daily newspaper website (www.zaman.com) and has plans to launch and English language edition (it has English language content on its website for some years).

The holding company that owns *Zaman*, Feza Publications Incorporated also owns a leading Turkish news agency, CHA, and a respected news weekly magazine *Aksiyon*. The hizmet is also involved in the publication of *Ekologi*, and environmental magazine and *Yeni Umit*, a theological studies publication, in addition to *Sizinti*.

A separate commercial group established and operates *Samanyolu TV*. When this national television station was started in the 1990s it faced an uphill battle to achieve commercial viability. Today it broadcasts via satellite across most of the globe and is one of Turkey's most popular networks, with a reputation for quality news reporting and family-friendly programming. The *hizmet* also supports the *Burc FM* radio network which broadcasts in major cities throughout Turkey.

Like its secondary schools and tertiary educational institutions the media outlets associated with the *hizmet* take a *temsil* rather than *teblig* approach. Apart from a limited number of devotional programs or columns the media content is secular and does not discuss religion directly. If the *hizmet* schools can be likened to 'secular' Christian schools such as those established by the Church of England then hizmet media outlets like Samanyolu can be likened to the British Broadcasting Commission (or the Australian Broadcasting Commission, or National Public Radio in the US).

A similar, *temsil* rather than *teblig,* approach can also ascribed to the *hizmet's* third sphere of operation: business networks and finance. In many respects the social networks of small and large businessmen associated with the *hizmet*, with their regular meetings and philanthropic orientation can be likened to secular service clubs such as Rotary International and the Lions Club, although arguably the philanthropic element of the *hizmet* circles is more substantial than is typically (but not always) the case with the service clubs. A more direct comparison might be made with the various Christian businessmen's groups the meet today in the United States and elsewhere. Or indeed with those that were so instrumental in the development of American society and economy in earlier centuries, as those earlier groups also directed much of their philanthropic efforts towards education.

The *hizmet* has established several business support agencies such as the Society for Social and Economic Solidarity with Pacific Countries (PASIAD) that are designed to function on several levels. At one level PASIAD seeks to promote trade and development by assisting Turkish and Asian businessmen to establish contacts with each other. PASIAD is often the first and only point of contact for Asian business groups visiting Turkey just as it is

frequently the main resource that Turkish business groups have for initiating contacts in Asia. But it is not only business groups that come to PASIAD for assistance. Not infrequently the Turkish government itself comes to PASIAD for assistance in working in Asia. This is because in many Asian countries the Gulen hizmet was established well before any official Turkish government trade bodies. PASIAD leverages the contacts, relationships and knowledge developed through the establishment of the *hizmet* schools to assist business relations. At the same time many of the Turkish businessmen who benefit from PASIAD's assistance also support the *hizmet* schools.

Asya Finans represents a very different kind of project within the Gulen hizmet community. As its names suggests, Asya Finans is a bank set up, in part, to assist finance business expansion in Central Asia. Not all of the sixteen financial backers who contributed to Asya Finans capital, now worth in excess of a half billion dollars, are closely linked with the hizmet but many of them are. Asya Finans proved to be a very astute investment for these capitalists because the new financial institution was able to fill a gap in the Turkish business environment. One of the services that it has been able to offer is home loans, at time when conventional home mortgages have not been available to most Turks (following changes to the regulations governing banking home mortgages will finally become widely available in 2006). Asya Finans' loans are not conventional loans because they are modeled along the profit-loss sharing lines of modern Islamic banks that avoid charging conventional interest on loans. Such banks are becoming popular across the Muslim world but Asya Finans is probably unique among them in at least one respect. Islamic Banks typically make much of their religiosity in attempt to maximize their market advantage. In fact this is one of the reasons why many conventional banks are launching Islamic banking divisions. Asya Finans, on the other hand, makes no use of Islamic symbolism such as Arabic calligraphy or religious terminology.

A fourth line of public engagement for the *hizmet* commenced in January 1994 when Fethullah Gulen and a group of friends launched the Journalists and Writers Association. The association was set up as a forum for engaging national leaders, intellectuals and opinion-makers in dialogue on issues of vital national importance. Initially the association focused on events such Ramadan fast-breaking meals (*iftar*) with a diverse range of guests who otherwise would not have opportunity to meet together. It then organized a series of meetings on controversial issues of national importance such Kurdish identity and the Turkish state, relations between observant Muslims and 'secular' Turks, relations between orthodox Sunni Muslims and Alevi Muslims and so forth.

Beginning in 1998 the association commenced a series of large themed annual dialogue forums called the Abant Platform Meetings (named after the location of the early meetings). The association facilitated the establishing of a Eurasian Dialogue Platform to hold similar meetings in Europe together with Intercultural associations in America and Australia. In April 2004 an Abant Platform was held in Washington DC under the auspices of the School of Advanced International Studies at Johns Hopkins University. It is a measure of the success of the associations initiatives that other groups have also begun to hold *iftar* dinners and dialogue forums, and that issues once considered almost too sensitive to be opened broached and now regularly debated (Saritoprak and Griffith, 2005).

In all four spheres of operation outlined above – education, media, business networks and high-level dialogue, the emphasis of the *hizmet* has been upon *temsil* rather than *teblig,* action rather than instruction, and upon a neutral, inclusive approach to dialogue and cooperation. It is only the fifth and final sphere of the hizmet's activities that is concerned with religious teaching. The work in this sphere, led by Isik Publishing/The Light Publishing (under the Kaynak group of companies) represents a continuation of Fethullah Gulen's earlier ministry of religious instruction. A key element of this work is the monthly English-language magazine *The Fountain*, published in New Jersey and edited in Istanbul, and its sister publications around the world, designed to communicate religious values and perspectives in general, and a progressive Islamic particular, to a broad readership. This group is also active in the editing, translating, publishing and distributing of Fethullah Gulen's many books, together with those of other contemporary Islamic intellectuals and the works of Said Nursi. The primary readership for this material is Muslim but many of the works published are intended to introduce the basic teachings of Islam to those who are unfamiliar with Islam. Consequently, dialogue plays an important part in this sphere of *hizmet* activity as well.

Islam, Islamism and democracy in Indonesia[8]

Indonesia, the world's largest Muslim nation with around 215 million Muslims, has benefited from strong civil society institutions for almost a century, going well back in the period of Dutch colonialism, and most of these have had a clear Islamic identity. It is only since the fall of the Soeharto regime in May 1998 that Indonesia has commenced its transition to liberal democracy and, despite frequent setbacks, its progress has been much better than almost anyone expected was possible a mere decade ago. A large part of the credit for this, both before and since the fall of Soeharto, is due to civil sphere activism, much of it led by Islamic leaders and intellectuals.

Islam and Muslim intellectuals and activists have been making significant contributions to the growth of civil society and the articulation of democratic reformist aspirations in Indonesia since the beginning of the 20th century. The many practical contributions of the now 30 million strong Muhammadiyah and 40 million strong NU in the civil sphere, beginning in the Dutch period and continuing through to the present, are very significant but they are also easily overlooked. Dutch colonial administrations in the East Indies varied in their degrees of liberality but generally had a miserly approach to the welfare of their colonial subjects. Without the hospitals, health clinics, schools and orphanages provided by Muhammadiyah and NU, tens of millions of Indonesians would have been very much worse off. This much is easy to see, what is not so readily apparent is the extent to which Muhammadiyah and NU have moderated public opinion: dampening inter-communal conflict and promoting tolerance, socializing democracy and giving voice, and weight of numbers, to reformist aspirations.

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[8] Some of the material in this section was first presented as "Islam and Politics in post-Soeharto Indonesia", MIC conference on political Islam, University of Melbourne, July 12, 2003.

When, on the 17th of August 1945, two days after the Japanese had surrendered to the Allies, Sukarno, Hatta and the other nationalists, under some pressure from younger nationalists, suddenly declared independence, the brief and sketchy constitution drafted for the new state was very much a rough draft, and understood to be nothing more than an interim measure. Nevertheless, the nationalists were not entirely unprepared for independence. In fact, in the tumultuous final months of the war they had given considerable attention to debating the form and nature of the new Indonesian state. Some proto-Islamist elements wanted the new state to be an Islamic one, though there was little clarity about what exactly that meant, others wanted the state to a least recognize Islam as its official religion, much as Malaysia was later to do, and to take some responsibility for enforcing piety and morality. But most, including many of the leading *ulama* and other *santri* (practicing Muslims), were deeply concerned about making Islam the state religion. In part this was because they feared that such a move would alienate both non-Muslims (who represented approximately fifteen percent of the population) and non-*santri*, or so-called *abangan*, Muslims whose beliefs and practices did not conform with conventionally pious expectations (and who represented perhaps more than half the population).

Firstly, was agreed that the Indonesian state would be based on Pancasila and would therefore be a 'theistic' but non-sectarian state. Decades later, under Soeharto, Pancasila became a justly-maligned instrument of statist oppression but, in principle, it represents a compromise of no-small-genius and of far-reaching importance (Boland, 1971).

Some weeks before the declaration of independence Sukarno introduced Pancasila to the people of Indonesia in a June 1 speech setting forth his vision for the new nation. Significantly, the term was derived from Sanskrit - 'the Latin of Southeast Asia' the scholarly language of Indian thought and pre-Islamic civilization – rather than from Arabic. The first '*sila*', or principle, stated the belief in 'one God', and was therefore congruent with *tauhid* (the 'oneness' of God), the doctrinal core of Islam, without privileging any one tradition (although it did leave Buddhists and Hindu's at a disadvantage they generally chose not to construe it as such and adopted suitably monotheistic terminology when required).

Secondly, the secular, or at least non-sectarian, nature of the Indonesian state was reinforced by an eleventh hour decision to drop a caveat to the first *sila* of Pancasila that would have added the words: "with the obligation for adherents of Islam to carry out Islamic law" ("*dengan kewajiban untuk menjalankan Syari'ah Islam untuk pemeluk-pemeluknya*"). These 'seven words', as they became known, were to be part of the so-called 'Jakarta Charter' which was to form a preamble to the constitution when it was proclaimed on August the 18th 1945, the day after the declaration of independence. Sukarno and his colleagues were worried that the inclusion of the 'seven words' of the Jakarta Charter would have alienated non-Muslims and *abangan* Muslims whilst pleasing but a minority of Indonesians. They were almost certainly right, but the last-minute deletion left the proto-Islamists incensed and deeply suspicious. What, exactly, the inclusion of 'the seven words' would have meant was not then, and is not now, clear. Nevertheless, the Jakarta Charter became a bone-of-contention and a cause celebre for many Muslim politicians and leaders. And the emotive campaign that developed provided a mechanism by which leaders with radical Islamist convictions could draw behind them a long tail of socially conservative, but otherwise moderate, Islamic leaders for whom the Jakarta Charter was largely a matter of symbolic

importance. Unfortunately, the dispute was to have consequences that went well beyond what most of those who joined the fray could have envisioned.

The nationalists might have been able to declare independence in the brief interregnum following the Japanese surrender but it was only after four years of messy and bloody fighting in the nationalist revolution that the new nation achieved independence. And when most of the various revolutionary militia gladly laid down their arms in 1949, radical Islamist groups in the rugged mountains of Southern Sulawesi and West Java continued to fight for Dar'ul Islam, or an Islamic state. It took more than a decade for the new state to defeat the Dar'ul Islam holdouts and, it is clear now, that even then the victory was a good deal less comprehensive than was hoped for.

By the time of Indonesia's first general elections in 1955 sociological tensions, political ambitions and wounded pride had led to the traditionalist Muslims of NU parting company with their Modernist brothers (most of whom were from Muhammadiyah, but some of whom were from the more conservative groups such as Al-Irsyad, the association of Arab Indonesians) in the peak Muslim party Masyumi (Nakamura, 1983). When contesting the polls under its own banner, NU gained 18.4 percent of the 1955 vote, slightly less than Masyumi, which garnered 20.9 percent, and a little less than the 22.3 percent achieved by the Indonesia Nationalist Party (PNI – the party that was aligned with Sukarno) but ahead of the 16.4 percent achieved by the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI). The results were a surprise to many in the four large parties - the 1955 elections representing as they did the first ever opportunity to ascertain an objective and comprehensive map of communal allegiances in Indonesia. It was clear that the *aliran*, or 'streams' of communal allegiance associated with the large parties were surprisingly evenly matched in size. This confirmed the wisdom of Sukarno and the leading nationalists in pushing for a pluralistic and inclusivistic philosophical foundation for the new state. It did not, however, resolve the issue of the Jakarta Charter and the aspirations of the political Islamists.

With the national parliamentary elections successfully concluded the way was clear for a second round of voting at the end of the year to elect the 514 members of the Constitutional Assembly (Konstituante): the body charged with formulating a comprehensive replacement to the interim constitution of 1950. The 1950 Constitution, which emphasized parliamentary democracy, had replaced the vague and unsatisfactory 1945 Constitution, with its integralist, or totalitarian, vision of the state as a unified family. Although a considerable improvement over its precursor the 1950 Constitution was also never intended to be anything more than a stopgap measure.

Had the Constitutional Assembly been able to complete its task Indonesia would have had very likely gained a constitution of considerable sophistication, and importantly, one arrived at via a transparently democratic process that gave voice to all *aliran*. Unfortunately, in July 1959, nine months before it was scheduled to conclude its deliberations, Sukarno dissolved the Constitutional Assembly arguing that as it had not been able to arrive a consensus on the Jakarta Charter after sitting for three and a half years it lacked practical legitimacy and represented a failed experiment. This judgment conveniently overlooked all that the Constitutional Assembly had achieved, which included significant consensus on human rights and the division of powers within government (Fealy, 1994).

When Sukarno sacked the Constitutional Assembly he also dissolved parliament and announced a return to the 1945 Constitution with its strong, largely unchecked, presidential powers and weak parliament. In this he had the support of the military that, like Sukarno himself, were disturbed be the instability of multi-party parliamentary democracy and by rebellions such as Kartosuwirjo's Jihadi Islamist Darul Islam insurgency in West Java that had the army tied up throughout the 1950s, and its echoes in South Sulawesi and Aceh. The final straw for Sukarno was the PRRI rebellion of 1958 in West Sumatra, which had the support of both the CIA and key Masyumi leaders. This rebellion led not just to the banning of Masyumi and the demise of democracy but also to the long-lasting suppression of Islamism, both during Sukarno's 'Guided Democracy' regime of the 1960s and throughout Soeharto's New Order regime in the late 1960s, 1970s and 1980s. Relief was to come only in the final decade of Soeharto's New Order regime when the president, fearing the power of a restless military, embarked on a campaign of co-opting the Islamists.

The growth of progressive Islamic thought and civil society

The four decades between Sukarno's abolition of democracy in July 1959 and the holding of free and fair elections in July 1999, saw significant developments in Indonesian Islam. Throughout the 1960s and 1970s NU pragmatically avoided confrontation in the political arena. In politics it was busy with maintaining the good relations necessary to ensure success in obtaining business contracts, and, related to this, maintaining its influence within the Department of Religious Affairs, and on odd issues of religious importance, such as changes to family law. For the most part, however, it focused on its social and education affairs as a religious association, which were worked out through its network of around 20,000 *pesantren* (communal religious boarding schools) spread across Java, southern Sumatra and parts of Kalimantan. This approach was, if anything, made easier by Soeharto's move in 1973 to scrap all eleven political parties except Golkar and redirect Muslim political interests to the newly created United Development Party (PPP) and nationalist interests to the Indonesian Democratic Party (PDI).

For the traditionalists the most important developments occurred outside politics and revolved largely around intellectual reform. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s the *pesantren* system was steadily modernized and a growing number of *pesantren* graduates went on to complete tertiary studies, either at the increasingly sophisticated State Islamic Institutes (IAIN) or at regular universities. A small but significant number also went on to obtain post-graduate qualifications abroad. For many young activists and intellectuals the combination of a modern, secular education and a rich, classical Islamic education was a very productive one. The 1970s saw the emergence of progressive Islamic thought, pioneered by gifted young intellectuals such as Nurcholish Madjid and Abdurrahman Wahid, further contributing to educational reform (Barton, 1996a; 1997a; 1997b).

The early 1980s saw a largely progressive and youthful reform movement within NU steadily gain ground to the point where, in 1984, its leading lights, Achmad Siddiq and Abdurrahman Wahid, were able to take over the national leadership of NU. Ideological and pragmatic considerations drove this new leadership team to withdraw NU, as an organization, from direct involvement with PPP, and to argue in favor of acquiescence to the New Order

regime's campaign for the adoption of Pancasila as 'the sole ideological basis' (*asas tunggal*) by all social and community organizations, a campaign aimed at reigning-in the power of Islamist groups (van Bruinessen, 1996, 163-89; Barton 2002a, 1996b).

Official repression of Islamism during the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s achieved curiously mixed results. In the formal political arena, of course, Islamism was effectively neutralized, as was every other oppositional ideology. PPP was permitted to function because it served as a useful pressure-valve for political frustrations and a safe channel for managing political ambitions, whilst at the same time helping maintain the fiction of Indonesian democracy. Nevertheless, the consistently strong electoral performance of PPP was a constant reminder to the Soeharto regime that it was never going to control political Islam through force alone.

The effect of state control in the civil sphere, however, was much more mixed. On the one hand the repression of Islamism helped provide the necessary environment for Islamic liberalism to develop into a significant social movement. It was not that pressure towards accommodation with the state in itself produced Islamic liberalism but rather that repression of Islamism allowed liberal ideas to be openly developed and disseminated without the sort of intimidation that had seen like-minded Islamic intellectuals in other Muslim societies either silenced or forced abroad.

On the other hand, the official repression of Islamism, which because it occurred in the context of military-backed authoritarianism was often excessively violent, was also counter-productive.   Driven underground, Islamism became a powerful social movement on university campuses and within certain mosque and *madrassa* (religious day-school) communities.   In its most extreme forms radical Islamism found a latent network of supporters amongst the families of former Dar'ul Islam members. The imprisonment of movement leaders only increased their influence amongst students angry at the injustices and corruption of the Soeharto regime, cut-off from other revolutionary ideologies and hungry for simple solutions to complex problems. The al-Qaeda linked terrorist organization Jemaah Islamiyah, about which little was known prior to the October 12, 2002 bombings in Bali that killed 202 people, has its origins in these circles.

More importantly, the banning of Masyumi under Sukarno and the neutering of its logical successor, Parmusi, under Soeharto, had the effect of developing within certain Modernist Muslims an unhealthy obsession with politics and at the same time embittering them to the point where much of the intellectual vigor and creativity that had earlier marked the Modernist movement was extinguished. The obsession with political achievement and the 'Holy Grail' of the Jakarta Charter had the tragically ironic effect of ensuring that modernism's most significant achievements were confined to the field of secular education, healthcare and social service, whilst intellectually significant religious thought largely failed to develop within succeeding generations of young Modernists.

As they sought to give voice to their political aspirations the hard-liners within the Modernist community found themselves blocked at every turn. In 1967 Soeharto had engineered an internal coup within Parmusi to ensure that former Masyumi leaders did not advance and then set about making political Islam an object of ridicule and suspicion. As the danger of

Communism began to recede in the 1970s Islamism and extremist Islamist politics began to replace Communism in the demonology of Soeharto's New Order regime. The result was that Islamist Modernists found opportunities for political engagement denied to them. As is so often the case with political repression, as their isolation increased so too did their determination to change the political status quo.

The result was the steady embitterment of many of modernism's brightest minds. Muhammad Natsir, the great Masyumi leader of the 1950s, responded by establishing the Islamic Preaching Council (Dakwah Islamiyah Indonesia – DDII) in 1967, to act as a vehicle for advancing the interests of radical Islamist politics and blocking Christian expansion (Hefner, 2000, 106-9; Liddle, 1993). Unfortunately the combined effect of an obsession with politics and the failure of the Modernists to provide sound theological education for their youth was to boost the growth of Islamist radicalism.

On the 20th of October 1999, almost six months after the parliamentary elections, Abdurrahman Wahid was elected president by Indonesia's Peoples Consultative Assembly (MPR – a kind of super-parliament acting as an electoral college). His surprise victory was made possible by two factors: the discrediting of Golkar candidate BJ Habibie in the wake of the Timor referendum and the successful bid by the Central Axis 'coalition' to block the ascension of Megawati Sukarnoputri.

The Wahid presidency is easily dismissed as an outright failure but to do so is to be much too simplistic. It certainly was a disappointment but it also achieved much more than was acknowledged at the time, not least in articulating what it is that democratic reform requires. In many ways it was a victim of its own idealism in that it against the insidious inflation of expectations it was inevitably found wanting.

Sadly, there was much more at stake in the Wahid presidency than simply the personal success of Abdurrahman Wahid. The Wahid presidency was also a test of the conviction politics of the three large reformist parties and of liberal Islamic politics. Even before the fall of Soeharto much had been hoped for from an alliance of the reformist leaders Megawati Sukarnoputri, Abdurrahman Wahid and Amien Rais and later of their parties PDI-P, PKB and PAN. What this alliance promised was not just a coming together of the mass-based reform camps but the union of the secular-nationalist, Islamic traditionalist and Islamic modernist *aliran*. Many looked to it in the hope that this union would point the way forward for Islam to contribute its idealism and grass-roots social connectedness to politics in a progressive and non-sectarian fashion. It had the potential to become the ultimate response to Islamism, overpowering it by weight of numbers whilst simultaneously modeling to the public a better way for Islam to engage in politics.

The impoverishment of religious thought amongst moderate Modernists in Muhammadiyah and elsewhere left the growth of both the underground Islamist movements and the small, officially tolerated conservative foundations funded by foreign Wahhabist institutions without effective competition for the hearts and minds of Modernist youth. Moreover, the international resurgence of interest in Islam, which contributed to the steady '*santri*-fication' of Indonesian society saw many students from *abangan* families drawn to 'controversial' Islamist groups, seduced by their simple answers to complex problems (Hefner, 1997a).

Nevertheless, the nascent progressive Islam movement continued to develop its ideas and its social networks and become steadily bolder and more resilient. This is where Indonesia and Turkey have differed so markedly from Egypt and Pakistan. Each of these four nations has produced intellectual giants who have pioneered the renewal of Islamic thought and shown that it can be progressive, profoundly tolerant and deeply committed to building modern democratic states and healthy civil societies. But it is only Turkey and Indonesia that have been able to build vigorous and enduring social movements around these progressive ideas.

At the beginning of the 20th century Egypt's Muhammad 'Abduh charted a magisterial vision for the renewal of Islamic thought but his Islamic modernism movement was to find its greatest success not in Egypt, where it degenerated into reactionary Islamism, but in Indonesia's Muhammadiyah. Six decades later, Fazlur Rahman, was forced to leave his Islamic research unit in Pakistan and go into exile at the University of Chicago. Rahman's ideas found much more support in Indonesia than they ever did in Pakistan. Nurcholish Madjid, whom Indonesia and the world lost when he succumbed to cancer in August this year, completed his PhD under Rahman in Chicago, as did Syafi'i Anwar, the former chairman of Muhammadiyah.

Beginning in the early 1970s Nurcholish Madjid and Abdurrahman Wahid, each in their own circles of Muhammadiyah and NU youth, led a social and intellectual movement that came to be known as the 'renewal of Islamic thought movement'. At the time they were in their early thirties.   Today there are dozens of young, thirty-something, intellectuals, from both Muhammadiyah and NU, in more than thirty NGOs, continuing the project of developing progressive Islamic thought.

Nurcholish returned from Chicago in 1985 and channelled his energies into teaching at the IAIN in Jakarta and at his Paramadina foundation, where he helped thousands of students and upper-middle class Indonesians learn how deeper piety, progressive thought and genuine tolerance could grow together. Abdurrahman contributed to the development of a series of key NGOs and then went on to lead NU, as chairman, for fifteen years and then Indonesia, as president, for two years.

Today Paramadina has lost much of its earlier vigour, NU youth are still recovering from the upsets and disappointment of Abdurrahman's tumultuous presidency and both Muhammadiyah and NU have lurched to the right under new, deeply conservative, leadership teams. Progressive Islamic NGOs, such as the Liberal Islamic Network (JIL) in Jakarta and the Institute for the Study of Islam and Society (LKiS) in Jakarta, and the religious minority groups that they have helped defend, face increasingly brazen attacks from Islamist militia such as the Islamic Defenders Front (FPI) and even from semi-official bodies such as the Indonesia Council of Ulama (MUI).

Even so, Indonesia, together with Turkey, continues to lead the Muslim world in the development of progressive Islamic thought and civil society activism. Why has Indonesia been so successful? A large part of the reason is that in Indonesia, as in Turkey, Sufism has imbued traditionalist Islamic thought with a deeply tolerant and adaptable outlook. A second

reason is that NU, by sustaining and developing Islamic scholarship through its rich and diverse *pesantren* network has continued to produce fresh young Islamic intellectuals able to engage with the challenges of their day. A third factor has been the secular status of the Indonesian state, and, curiously related to this, the interventionist oversight of the department of religious affairs, and in particular, that department's far-sighted development of the IAIN system to develop the potential of *pesantren* and *madrassa* graduates. Adding to this has been the stabilizing and modernising influence coming from Indonesia's uniquely large mass-based Islamic organizations NU and Muhammadiyah.

Brilliant progressive Islamic intellectuals such as Nurcholish Madjid and Abdurrahman Wahid built on this foundation at an opportune time in Indonesia's political history and made the most of the protection afforded to them by the state to develop progressive groups and networks in civil society.   Their ideas today face fierce opposition from both political and jihadi Islamists but progressive Islamic thought has put down deep roots in Indonesian society, quietly shaping the outlook of many, including President Yudhoyono himself, whose own cabinet represents a microcosm of a nation caught up in a relentless struggle of ideas to define what role Islam plays in the modern state.

Nurcholish showed Muslims and non-Muslims alike that religion does not need to be represented by political parties and defended by political campaigns for it to shape the character of a nation. His great contribution lies in his deeply original and significant contribution to our understanding of how best religious faith can contribute to our very plural modern world.

Although trained in a *madrassa* as an Islamic scholar, Nurcholish transcended the boundaries of that intellectual tradition and successfully combined traditional Islamic scholarship, with its deep knowledge of the Koran, of Islamic jurisprudence and of Sufi mysticism, with critical modern thought.

The creative synthesis of intellectual traditions that resulted gave him the tools to systematically rethink how Islam should be lived in the modern world. Specifically, by employing modern approaches to hermeneutics in the pressing task of *ijtihad*, or reinterpretation of the Koran, Nurcholish was able to demonstrate how best the core teachings of Islam can be applied in this modern age, congruent with, but not limited by, traditional understandings of Sharia, or Islamic law. He argued cogently that true godliness, in an individual and in a nation, come from inner transformation not from external force or imposition of law.

Nurcholish rejected as profoundly mistaken the conviction of modern Islamists that Islamist parties, and the imposition of Sharia via state legislation, hold the key to achieving societies and states that are more truly Islamic.

Instead he argued for, and put into practice, the power of education to transform the individual, and through them the world around them. His Paramadina foundation (which taught tens of thousands of evening and weekend seminar attendees the basics of Islam according to progressive and liberal perspectives) and the related Paramadina school and

Paramadina university (which strive for high quality modern secular education) reflect this vision.

Central to his understanding of education and the pursuit of knowledge is the role of dialogue and open exchange both within the Islamic ummah and between ummah, or religious communities, including between the 'Muslim world' and 'the west' and between Muslims and followers of other faiths.

Progressive Islam and the response to jihadi terrorism

Although we should, by now, be well aware of the power of religious ideas and religious thinkers to influence society and inspire social movements we continue to underestimate their influence, especially within the Muslim world. Sadly, if we do give them consideration then we tend to think only of the negative examples that interrupt our studied indifference.

Since that fateful September day four years ago we have been obliged to pay attention to thinkers such as Sayyid Qutb and his modern followers in al-Qaeda, Jemaah Islamiyah and elsewhere, and to their embracing of what Samuel Huntington famously dubbed a clash of civilizations mentality.

What we don't yet properly understand, but now need to begin to recognize, is that it is progressive Islamic intellectuals such as Nurcholish Madjid who have been persuading many, directly and indirectly, towards a very different, less materialistic, less political and wholly more peaceful understanding of how faith can change the world.

Many people, Muslim leaders included, feel uncomfortable with linking terrorism with a 'struggle of ideas'. Terrorists such as those behind the London bombings, they argue, are simply criminals and have nothing to do with Islam because anyone who uses the violent means of terrorism cannot be a true Muslim. The problem with this line of reasoning is that it ignores the sociology of religious movements (Kepel, 2004; Roy, 2004).

Ideas matter and writers have great power. If the powerful, modern, ideas of jihadi Islamism are not met in the marketplace of ideas with an equally vigorous, contemporary, articulation of peaceful Islam then 'the center of gravity' of public discourse will inevitably slide towards those ideas that appear most powerful and relevant to the modern world (Berman, 2003).

The progressive interpretation of Islam developed by Nurcholish Madjid and his friends, such as former president Abdurrahman Wahid, represents a powerful alternative to jihadi Islamism.

Although Muslims have suffered more than any other group of people from the effects and consequences of jihadi Islamist terrorism strong, statements speaking out against the misuse of Islam by jihadi terrorists have been few and far between. It is certainly understandable that Muslim communities and leaders feel themselves to be under siege and feel their faith to be unfairly maligned by actions of a small minority of extremists acting in contradiction to

the foundational values of Islam. In this struggle of ideas and contest for hearts and minds, however it is important that intellectual and moral leadership should come to the fore (Kepel, 2004, Roy 2004). It is no coincidence that some of the most courageous and lucid public statements condemning jihadi terrorism have come from leading progressive Islamic intellectuals such as Fethullah Gulen and Abdurrahman Wahid.

Fethullah Gulen's recent comments on this issue are lucid, comprehensive and sophisticated and, given the importance of the issue, warrant quoting in full:

> "I regret to say that in the countries Muslims live, some religious leaders and immature Muslims have no other weapon at hand than their fundamentalist interpretation of Islam: they use this to engage people in struggles that serve their own purposes. In fact, Islam is a true faith, and it should be lived truly. On the way to attaining faith one can never use untrue methods. In Islam, just as a goal must be legitimate, so must be all the means employed to reach that goal. From this perspective, one cannot achieve Heaven by murdering another person. A Muslim cannot say, "I will kill a person and then go to Heaven." God's approval cannot be won by killing people. One of the most important goals for a Muslim is to win the pleasure of God, another is making the name of Almighty God known in the universe. Dissatisfied youth has lost its spirituality. Some people take advantage of such people, giving them a couple of dollars, or turning them into robots. They have drugged them. This has become a topic on the agenda these days that can be read about in the popular press. These young people were abused to an extent that they could be manipulated. They have been used as murderers on the pretext of some crazy ideals or goals and they have been made to kill people. Some evil-minded people have wanted to achieve certain goals by exploiting these young people. Yes, killing a human is a truly awful thing. The Qur'an says that killing one person is the same as killing all people. Ibn 'Abbas said that a murderer will stay in Hell for eternity. This is the same punishment that is assigned to deniers of God. This means that a murderer is subjected to the same punishment as a disbeliever. If this is a fundamental principle of religion, then it should be taught in education.
>
> An individual who accepts Islam from the heart will never knowingly take part in terrorism. The acts of terrorism associated with Islam may have been perpetrated by some Muslims who had not internalised the depth of Islam. Terrorism, as the name itself indicates, is a complicated issue. Analyzing terrorism is not something that is easy to do. Despite this, because it is so ugly in its nature and because many Muslims are charged with it, terrorism must be addressed with a great deal of consideration. Administrators and intelligence agents have to try to find the originators and the motivating factors of terrorist activities. This will help develop international strategies to stop it.
> …   Moreover, there are multi-national covert or open organizations who have based all of their efforts on destruction and the creation of fear in society. To extend the borders of their activities, they agitate the unhappy segments of society by stirring up trouble and fomenting violence." (Gulen, 2005: 466-7)

Abdurrahman Wahid's comment in the Washington Post in the wake of the October 1, 2005 terrorist attacks in Bali echo the observations of Gulen:

> "The latest suicide bombings on the resort island of Bali appear to have been carried out by young Indonesian Muslims indoctrinated in an ideology of hatred. Once again the cult of death has proved its ability to recruit misguided fanatics and incite them to violate Islam's most sacred teachings in the very name of God. The only way to break this vicious cycle is by discrediting the perverse ideology that underlies and motivates such brutal acts of terrorism." (Wahid, Abdurrahman and Taylor, C. Holland, "In Indonesia, Songs Against Terrorism", The Washington Post, October 8, 2005.

Turkey, Indonesia and the future of civil society in the Muslim world

The ways in which the principles and teachings of a religion are understood and applied vary according to historical and social context (Tibi, 1990). This is true with Islam as it is with the other world faiths. It is certainly something that is well understood and appreciated by Fethullah Gulen and by the Bediuzzaman Said Nursi and earlier Anatolian scholars. They have an understandable pride in what they see to be the strengths of Anatolian Islam, such as deep spirituality, an emphasis on love and the heart rather than mere outward conformity to the law, tolerance and the non-judgmental acceptance of others, and a rich tradition of learning and seeking after the truth – not closing the mind to modern science and not being seducing into inaction by nostalgia for the past. Gulen sees these core characteristics of Anatolian Islam as arising, in large measure, from a healthy embrace of Sufism that permits equal development of heart and mind (Michel, 2005b; Saritoprak, 2003). Like Nursi and other Sufi scholars before him Gulen believes that human beings, who in their physicality are animals but in their intellectual and spiritual potential are meant to be so much more than animals, neglect the pursuit of both the truth that comes through the mind and the truth that comes through the heart at the cost of sinking back to the level of mere animals. But attending to one and forgetting the other - neglecting either the life of the mind or the life of the heart is also to invite decline:

> "Neglect of the intellect … would result in a community of poor, docile mystics. Negligence of the heart or spirit, on the other hand, would result in crude rationalism devoid of any spiritual dimension … It is only when the intellect, spirit and body are harmonized, and man is motivated towards activity in the illuminated way of the Diving message, that he can become a complete being and attain true humanity." (Gulen, 2000: 105-6)

Gulen would certainly concur with Blaise Pascal that: *"We arrive at the truth, not by the reason only, but also by the heart."*

It is impossible to properly understand the social movement, or community of service (*hizmet*), that has arisen around Fethullah Gulen without understanding his ideas. In many respects, in his thinking, Gulen is doing little that is wholly innovative or unprecedented. He sees himself as essentially articulating the insights and wisdom of 'Anatolian Islam' and

applying them to modern society, building on those who have gone before him, Said Nursi in particular.

Despite that fact that Anatolia and the Indonesian archipelago lie at opposite ends of the Muslim world, and that there has been comparatively little direct exchange between the two cultural spheres, 'Anatolian Islam' and 'Indonesian Islam' are remarkably congruent. The contribution of Sufism to the development character of Indonesian Islam is a key reason for this. It is not surprising then that the thought of leading progressive Islamic intellectuals in Indonesia, such as Nurcholish Madjid and Abdurrahman, shares essential elements with the thought of Fethullah Gulen in Turkey.

At the level of social movements it is also not surprising that the development of the Gulen movement in Turkey parallels the development of Islamic social movements in Indonesia. In its emphasis on science and education, its harnessing of petit bourgeoisie business circles for modern philanthropy, and its support for economic development and cultural modernization the Gulen movement closely parallels Muhammadiyah. But in its Sufistic emphasis on the development of heart and mind it is much closer to Nahdlatul Ulama.

Given the way in which Muhammadiyah quickly developed to become a mass-based organization of around thirty million members today it is reasonable to ask whether, in time, the Gulen movement might not also became a very large mass-based movement. It needs to be remembered, however, that the national context in Indonesia is very different to the Turkish context. In 1912, when Muhammadiyah was formed, Indonesia did not yet exist, the 'Dutch East Indies' was a European colony, and there was no 'national' government looking after the educational and health needs of ordinary Indonesians. Muhammadiyah developed rapidly to meet great social needs. It also developed in response to the Muhammad 'Abduh's ideas about Islamic modernism and desire of a newly emerging class of urban traders and businessmen to work out their Islamic faith in modern society.

Turkey was never colonized and the enormous cultural, intellectual and social legacy of the Ottoman Empire meant national context was, and is, very different to that of Indonesia. Whereas 'Indonesian society' in its desire to modernize and develop was very open to 'Abduh's modernist ideas (in fact more so than any other part of the Muslim world, including 'Abduh's own Egypt) Turkey had an even better local guide in Said Nursi.

Given the way in both Muhammadiyah and NU have given rise to Islamist politics (although the more radical developments came from smaller groups, such as Al Irsyad, operating outside both of these relatively moderate mass-based organizations) it might reasonably asked whether there is not the potential for the Gulen movement to do the same thing. In examining this it needs to be understood that, at the level of ideas, Fethullah Gulen and the movement around him is much more aligned with the ideas of the leading progressive intellectuals that have arisen out of Muhammadiyah, and even more so Nahdlatul Ulama, and the small NGOs that have emerged in response ideas over the past three decades.

Intellectuals such as Nurcholish Madjid and Abdurrahman Wahid and their younger colleagues, can be described as being post-Islamist, though this is not a term that they are

likely to use of themselves. That is to say, their thought reflects a response to, and rejection of, Islamism. They have arrived, with considerable intellectual sophistication and depth, at a position that brings together classical Islamic scholarship and modern critical thought in a way that draws deeply from Islam's wellspring to produce a modern Islamic humanism. It is tempting (as I have done in the past, 1997a, 1996a) to call this thought Islamic liberalism but given the prevailing political and philosophical nuances associated with the term liberalism, not least its suggestion of an atheistic, or at least agnostic, humanism, many progressive Islamic intellectuals feel that term is likely to miscommunicate their position.

It is also tempting to describe this position as 'moderate Islam'. There is good reason for favoring such a term as the concept of seeking a 'middle way' and a path of moderation is well established in Islamic thought (Barton, 1996b; Kuru, 2003). Nevertheless, the term 'moderate' is just as fraught with problems as is 'liberalism'. Moderate can often suggest a lack or absence, a luke-warmness or half-heartedness, and a lack of deep commitment, and this in no way does justice to the robust, energetic and clear-minded thought that we are talking about here.

In the absence of a better and more comprehensive term describing this thought as progressive Islamic thought might be the best that we can do. The key thing here is that Fethullah Gulen shares with Nurcholish Madjid, Abdurrahman Wahid, and other similar intellectuals in Indonesia, a forward-looking, inclusive, tolerant and dialogical approach to Islam. And this approach is most certainly post-Islamist, in that it rejects, at a profound philosophical, theological and social level, the Islamist project of trying to change individuals and society through 'Shari'ah legal reforms' that would force them to 'become more pious'. These Islamic civil-society movements represent strong support for Jose Casanova's thesis (1994) that religious movements can be progressive, inclusive and actively engaged in the public discourse whilst at the same time supporting secular liberal democracy. This is because they are social movements that not only function in the civil sphere but conform to the ideals of pluralism and tolerance that John Keane (2003: pp. 175-209) and others list as being required for global civil society.

All of this, however, begs the question of why there is such a cloud of suspicion hanging over the Gulen movement (Cetin, 2005; Ozdalga, 2005). This paper has attempted to explore Gulen's thought and the evolution of the social movement around him and in doing so demonstrate that this is indeed a progressive movement of thought that is deeply opposed to Islamism. But to fully understand what is happening we need to also look at the national context.

Modern Turkey is unique in the Islamic world (with the exceptions of the former Soviet Union and China which overlap the edges of the Muslim world) in its aggressive, totalizing approach to secularism and secularization. There is no question that the Gulen movement is deeply critical of the positivistic character of Turkish secularism. But to argue that it is opposed to secularity and democracy is to misread the movement by projecting the dark anxieties and phobias of the more militant elements of the republic onto precisely the sort of movement that offers Turkey's (and the entire Muslim world's) best hope of uniting Islam, modernization, and secular, liberal democracy.

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